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NEW YORK

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No. 5

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

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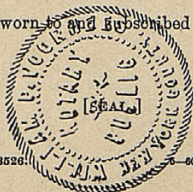
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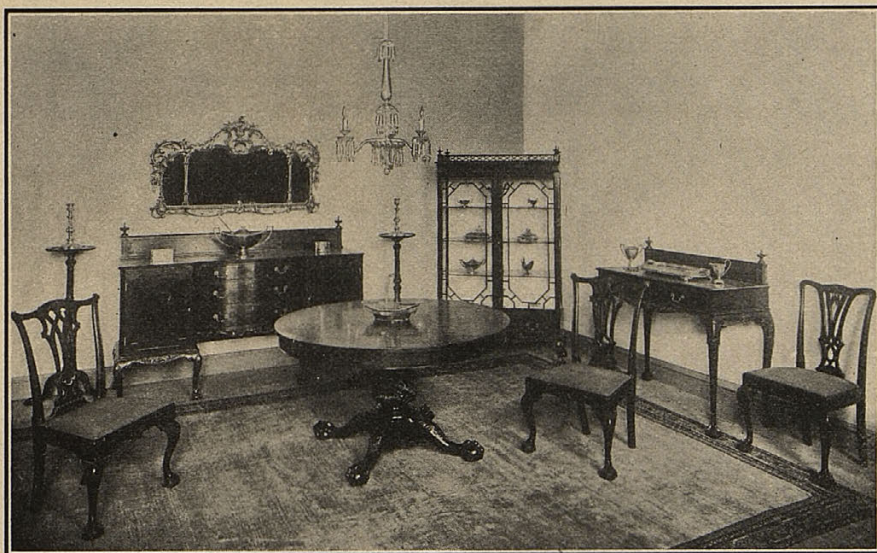
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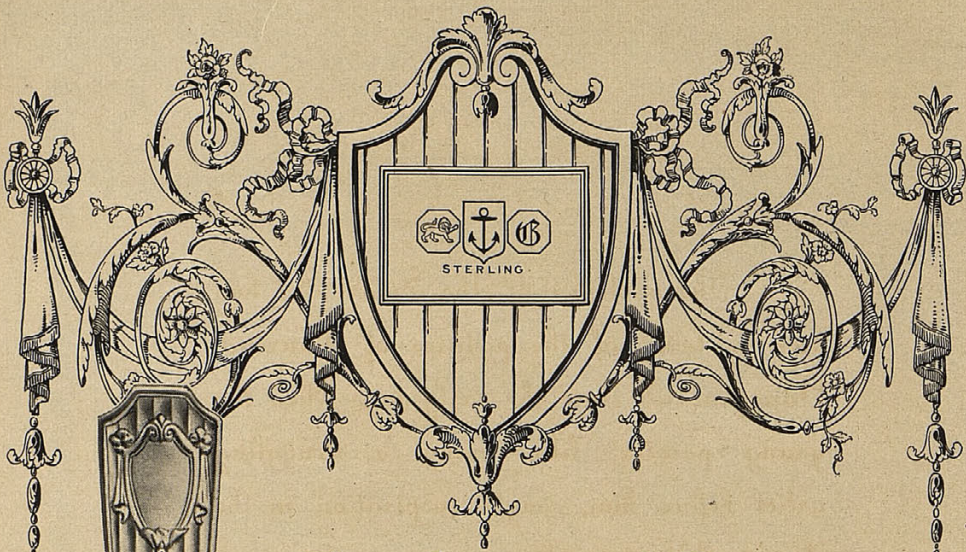


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A Gray Morning, Valley of the Loing, Moret, France

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THE SMART SET

*Its Prime Purpose is to Provide Lively Entertainment
For Minds That Are Not Primitive*

THE SAME ROAD

By Ethel Watts Mumford

MARCUS GARD sat at his library table apparently in rapt contemplation of a pair of sixteenth century bronze inkwells, strange twisted shapes, half man, half beast, bearing in their breasts twin black pools. But his thoughts were far from their grotesque beauty—centered on vast schemes of destruction and reconstruction. The room was still, so quiet, in spite of its proximity to the crowded life of Fifth Avenue, that one divined its steel construction and the doubled and trebled casing of its many windows. The walls, hung with green Genoese velvet, met a carved and coffered ceiling, and touched the upper shelf of the breast-high bookcases that lined the walls. No picture broke the simple unity of color. Here and there a Donatello bronze silhouetted a slim shape, or a Florentine portrait bust smiled with veiled meaning from the quiet shadows. The shelves were rich in books in splendid bindings, gems of ancient workmanship or modern luxury, for the Great Man had the instinct of the masterpiece.

The door opened softly, and the secretary entered, a look of uncertainty on his handsome young face. The slight sound of his footfall disturbed the master's contemplation. He looked up,

relieved to be drawn for a moment from his reflection.

"What is it, Saunders?" he asked, leaning back and grasping the arms of his chair with a gesture of control familiar to him.

"Mrs. Martin Marteen is here, very anxious to see you. She let me understand it was about the Heim Vandyke. I knew you were interested, so I ventured, Mr. Gard—"

"Yes, yes—quite right. Let her come in here." He rose as he spoke, shook his cuffs, pulled down his waistcoat and ran a hand over his bald spot and silvery hair. Marcus Gard was still a handsome man. He remained standing, and, as the door reopened, advanced to meet his guest. She came forward, smiling, and, taking a white-gloved hand from her sable muff, extended it graciously.

"Very nice of you to receive me, Mr. Gard," she said, and the tone of her mellow voice was clear and decisive. "I know what a busy man you are."

"At your service." He bowed, waved her to a seat and sank once more into his favorite chair, watching her the while intently. If she had come to negotiate the sale of the Heim Vandyke, let her set forth the conditions. It was no part of his plan to show how much

he coveted the picture. In the meantime she was very agreeable to look at. Her strong, regular features suggested neither youth nor age. She was of the goddess breed. Every detail of the lady's envelope was perfect—velvet and fur, a glimpse of exquisite antique lace, a sheen of pearl necklace, neither so large as to be ostentatious nor so small as to suggest economy. The Great Man's instinct of the masterpiece stirred. "What can I do for you?" he said, as she showed no further desire to explain her visit.

"I let fall a hint to Mr. Saunders," she answered—and her smile shone suddenly, giving her straight Greek features a fascinating humanity—"that I wanted to see you about the Heim Vandyke." She paused, and his eyes lit.

"Yes—portrait? A good example, I believe."

She laughed quietly. "As you very well know, Mr. Gard. But that, let me own, was merely a ruse to gain your private ear. I have nothing to do with that gem of art."

The Great Man's face fell. He was in for a bad quarter of an hour. Lady with a hard luck story—he was not unused to the type—but Mrs. Martin Marteen! He couldn't very well dismiss her unheard, an acquaintance of years' standing, a friend of his sister's. His curiosity was aroused. What could be the matter with the impeccable Mrs. Marteen? Perhaps she had been speculating. She read his thoughts.

"Quite wrong, Mr. Gard. I have not been drawn into the stock market. The fact is, I *have* something to sell, but it isn't a picture—but autographs. You collect them, do you not? Now I have in my possession a series of autograph letters by one of the foremost men of his day; one, in fact, in whom you have the very deepest interest."

"Napoleon!" he exclaimed.

She laughed. "I have heard him so called," she answered. "I have here some photographs of the letters. They are amateur pictures—in fact, I took them myself; so you will have to pardon trifling imperfections. But I'm sure you will see that it is a series of the first im-

portance." From her muff she took a flat envelope, slipped off the rubber band with great deliberation, glanced at the enclosures and laid them on the table.

The Great Man's face was a study. His usual mask of indifferent superiority deserted him. The blow was so unexpected that he was for once staggered and off his guard. His hand was shaking, as with an oath he snatched up the photographs. It was his own handwriting that met his eye, and Mrs. Marteen had not exaggerated when she had designated the letters as a "series of the first importance." With the shock of recognition came the doubting of his own senses. Mrs. Martin Marteen blackmailing him? Preposterous! His eyes sought the lady's face. She was quite calm and self-possessed.

"I need not point out to you, Mr. Gard, the desirability of adding these to your collection. These letters give clear information concerning the value to you of the Texas properties mentioned, which are now about to pass into the possession of your emissaries if all goes well. Of course, theirs being placed in the hands of those most interested would cause you to make your purchase at a vastly higher figure; it might prevent their acquisition altogether. But far more important than that, they conclusively prove that your company *is* a monopoly framed in the restraint of trade—proof that will be a body blow to your defense if the threatened action of the federal authorities takes place.

"Of course," continued Mrs. Marteen, as Gard uttered a suppressed oath, "you couldn't foresee a year ago what future conditions would make the writing of those letters a very dangerous thing; otherwise you would have conducted your business by word of mouth. Believe me, I do not underrate your genius."

He laid his hands roughly upon the photographs. "I have a mind to have you arrested this instant," he snarled.

"But you won't," she added—"not while you don't know where the originals are. It means too much to you. The slightest menacing move toward me would be fatal to your interests. I don't

wish you any harm, Mr. Gard; I simply want money."

In spite of his perturbation, amazement held him silent. If a shining angel with harp and halo had confronted him with a proposition to rob a church, the situation could not have astonished him more. She gave him time to recover.

"Of course you must readjust your concepts, particularly as to me. You thought me a rich woman—well, I'm not. I've about twenty-five thousand dollars left, and a few—resources. My expenses this season will be unusually heavy."

"Why this season?" He asked the question to gain time. He was thinking hard.

"My daughter Dorothy makes her debut, as perhaps you may have heard."

Gard gave another gasp. Here was a mother blackmailing the Gibraltar of finance for her little girl's coming-out party. Suddenly, quite as unexpectedly to himself as to his hearer, he burst into a peal of laughter.

"I see—I see. 'The time has come to talk of many things.'"

She met his mood. "Well, not so *much* time. You see, not *all* kings are cabbage heads—and while pigs may not have wings, riches have."

"You are versatile, Mrs. Marteen. I confess this whole interview has an 'Alice in Wonderland' quality." He was regaining his composure. "But I see you want to get down to figures. May I inquire your price?"

"Fifty thousand dollars." There was finality in her tone.

"And how soon?"

"Within the next week. You know this is a crisis in this affair—I waited for it."

"Indeed! You seem to have singular foresight."

She nodded gravely. "Yes, and unusual means of obtaining information, as it is needless for me to inform you. I am, I think, making you a very reasonable offer, Mr. Gard. You would have paid twice as much for the Vandyke."

"And how do you propose, Mrs. Marteen, to effect this little business deal without compromising either of us?"

His tone was half banter, but her reply was to the point.

"I will place my twenty-five thousand with your firm, with the understanding that you are to invest for me, in any deal you happen to be interested in—Texas, for instance. It wouldn't be surprising if my money should treble, would it? In fact, there is every reason to expect it—is there not? If all I own is invested in these securities, I would not desire them to decline, would I? I merely suggest this method," she continued, with a shrug as if to deprecate its lack of originality, "because it would be a transaction by no means unusual to you, and would attract no attention."

He looked at her grimly. "You think so?" Let me hear how you intend to carry out the rest of the transaction—the delivery of the autographs in question."

"To begin with, I will place in your hands the plates—all the photographs."

"How can I be sure?" he demanded.

"You can't, of course; but you will have to accept my assurance that I am honest. I promise to fulfill my part of the bargain—literally to the letter. You may verify and find that the series is complete. Your attorneys, to whom you wrote these, will doubtless tell you that they personally destroyed these documents, but they doubtless have a record of the dates of letters received at this time. You can compare; they are all there; I hold out nothing."

"But if they say they have destroyed the letters—what in the name of—"

"Oh, no; they destroyed your communications perhaps, after 'contents noted.' But they never had your letters, for the simple reason that they never received them. Very excellent copies they were—most excellent."

Mr. Marcus Gard was experiencing more sensations during his chat with Mrs. Marteen than had fallen to his lot for many a long day. His tremendous power had long made his position so secure that he had met extraordinary situations with the calm of one who controls them. He had startled and held others spellbound by his own infinite foresight, resource and energy. The situation was

reversed. He gazed fascinated in the fine blue eyes of another and more ruthless general.

"My dear madam, do you mean to infer that this *coup* of yours was planned and executed a year ago, when I, even I," and he thumped his deep chest, "had no idea what these letters might come to mean? Do you mean to tell me *that*?"

"Yes"—and she smiled at his evident reluctance to believe—"yes, exactly. You see, I saw what was coming—I knew the trend. I have friends at court—the Supreme Court, it happens—and I was certain that the little cloud no larger than a man's hand might very well prove to contain the whirlwind; so—well, there was just a flip of accident that makes the present situation possible. But the rest was designed, I regret to admit—cold-blooded design on my part."

"With this end in view?" He tapped the photographs strewn upon his desk.

"With this end in view," she confessed.

He was silent a moment, lost in thought; then he turned upon her suddenly.

"Mind, I haven't acceded to your demands," he shouted.

"Is the interview at an end?" she asked, rising and adjusting the furs about her throat. "If so, I must tell you the papers are in the hands of persons who would be very much interested in their contents. If they don't see me—hearing from me won't do, you understand, for a situation is conceivable, of course, when I might be coerced into sending a message or telephoning one—if they don't *see* me personally, the packet will be opened—and eventually, of course, after the Texas purchase is adjusted, they will find their way into the possession of the District Attorney. I have taken every possible precaution."

"I don't doubt that in the least, madam—confound it, I don't! Now when will you put the series, lock, stock and barrel, into my hands?"

"When you've done that little turn for me in the market, Mr. Gard. You may trust me."

"On the word—of a *débutante*?" he

demanded, with a snap of his square jaws.

For the first time she flushed, the color mantling to her temples; she was a very handsome woman.

"On the word of a *débutante*," she answered, and her voice was steady.

"Well, then"—he slapped the table with his open hand—"if you'll send me to the office what you want to invest, I'll give orders that I will personally direct that account."

"Thank you so much," she murmured, rising.

"Don't go!" he exclaimed, his request a command. "I want to talk with you. Don't you know, you're the first person, man or woman, who has *held me up*—me, Marcus Gard! I don't see how you had the nerve. I don't see how you had the idea." He changed his bullying tone suddenly. "I wish—I wish you'd *talk* to me. I'm as curious as any woman."

Mrs. Martin Marteen moved toward the door.

"I'm selling you your autographs—not my autobiography. I'm *so* glad to have seen you. Good afternoon, Mr. Gard."

She was gone, and the Great Man had not the presence of mind to escort his visitor to the door or ring for attendance. He remained standing, gazing after her. His gaze shifted to the table, where, either by accident or design, the photographs remained, scattered. He chuckled grimly. Accident! Nothing was accidental with that Machiavelli in petticoats. She knew he would read those accursed lines, and realize with every sentence that in truth she was "letting him down easy." There was no danger in his backing out of his bargain. Seated at the desk, he perused his folly, and grunted with exasperation. Well, after all, what of it? He had coveted a masterpiece; now he was to have two in one—the contemplation of his own blunder, and Mrs. Marteen's criminal genius—cheap at the price. How long had this been going on? Whom had she victimized? And how in the world had she been able to obtain the whole correspondence? That his lawyers should have been deceived by copies was not so surprising—they never dreamed of

a substitution; the matter, not the letter, was proof enough to them of genuineness. But—he thumped his forehead. He had been staying with friends at Newport at the time. Had Mrs. Marteen been there? Of course! He took up the incriminating documents again and thoroughly mastered their contents, every turn of phrase, every between-the-line inference. Accidents could happen; he must be prepared for the worst. Not that negotiations would fail—but—not until the originals were in his hands and personally done away with would he feel secure. He recalled Mrs. Marteen's graceful and sumptuously clad figure, her clear cut, beautiful head, the power of her unwavering sapphire eyes, the gentle elegance of her voice. And this woman—had—held him up!

He turned on the electric lamp, opened a secret compartment drawer in the table, abstracted a tiny key, and, deftly making a packet of the scattered proofs, unlocked a small hidden safe behind a row of first editions of Bunyan and consigned them to secure obscurity.

A moment later his secretary entered the room in response to his ring.

"I'm going out," he said. "Lock up, will you, and at any time Mrs. Marteen wants to see me admit her at once."

Mr. Saunders's face shone. He, too, was a devout worshiper at the shrine of art.

"The Vandyke?" he inquired hopefully.

"Well, no—but I'm negotiating for a very remarkable series of letters—of—er—Napoleon—concerning—er Waterloo."

II

WHEN Marcus Gard dressed that evening, he was so absent-minded that his valet held forth for an hour in the servants' hall, with assurances that some mighty *coup* was toward. Not since the days of B. L. & W. or the rate war on the S. & O. had his master shown such complete absorption.

"He's like a blind drunk, or a man in a trance, he is—he's just not there in the head, and you have to walk around and

dress his body, like he was a dumb wax-work. If I get the lay, Smathers, I'll tip you off. There might be something in it for us. He's due for dinner and bridge at the Met., but unless Frenchy puts him out of the motor, he won't know when he gets there"—which proved true. Three times the chauffeur respectfully advised his master of their arrival, before the wondering eyes of the club *chasseur*, before the Great Man, suddenly recalled to the present, descended from his car and was conducted to his waiting host.

The first one of the company to shake hands with him was Victor Mahr—and Victor Mahr was a friend of Mrs. Marteen. The sudden recollection of this fact made him cast such a glance of scrutiny at the gentleman as to quite discompose him.

"What's the old man up to, gimletting me in the eye like that? He's got something up his sleeve," thought Mahr.

"I wonder did she ever corner *him*?" was the question uppermost in Gard's mind. He hated Mahr, and rather hoped that the lady had, then flushed with resentment at the thought that she would stoop to blackmail a man so obviously outside the pale. His mood was so unusual that every man in the circle was stirred with unrest and misgiving. Dinner brightened the general gloom, though there were but trifling inroads into the costly vintages. One doesn't play bridge with the Big Ones unless one's head is clear. Not till supper time did the talk drift from honors and trumps. Gard played brilliantly. His absent-mindedness changed to savage concentration. He played to win, and won relentlessly.

"What's new in the art world?" inquired Denning, as he lit a cigar. "Looted any museums lately?"

"Nothing new," Gard answered. "Haven't had time to bother. By the way, Mahr, what sort of a girl is the little *débutante* daughter of Mrs. Marteen—you know her, don't you?" He was watching Mahr keenly, and fancied he detected a shifty glance at the mention of the name. But Mahr answered easily:

"Dorothy? She's the season's beauty

—really a stunning-looking girl. You must have seen her; she was in Denning's box with her mother at 'La Bohème' last week."

"And," added Denning, "she'll be with us again tonight."

"Oh," said Gard, with indifference. "The dark one—I remember—tall—yes, she's like her mother, devilish handsome. Must send that child some flowers, I suppose."

Gard returned home, disgusted with himself. Why had he forced his mood upon these men? Why, above all things, had he mentioned Mrs. Marteen to Mahr, whom he despised? For the simple pleasure of speaking of her, of mentioning her name? Why had he suspected Mahr of being one of her victims? And why, in heaven's name, had he resented the very same notion? He lay in bed numbering the men of money and importance whom he knew to share Mrs. Marteen's acquaintance. They were numerous, both his friends and enemies. What had they done? What was her hold over them? Had she in all cases worked as silently, as thoroughly, as understandingly as she had with him? Did she always show her hand at the psychological moment? Did she rob only the rich—the guilty? Was she Robin Hood in velvet, antique lace and sables? Ah, he liked that—Mme. Robin Hood. He fell asleep at last and dreamed that he met Mrs. Marteen under the greenwood tree, and watched her as with unerring aim she sent a bolt from her bow through the heart of a running deer.

He awoke when the valet called him, and was amused with his dream. Not in years had such an interest entered his life. He rose, tubbed and breakfasted, and went, as was his wont, to his sister's sitting room.

"Well, Polly," he roared through the closed doors of her bedroom, "up late, as usual, I suppose! Well, I'm off. By the way, we aren't using the box next Monday night; lend it to Mrs. Marteen. That little girl of hers is coming out, you know, and we ought to do something for 'em now and again. I'll be at the library after three, if you want me."

At the office he found a courteous note thanking him for his kindness in offering to direct her investments and inclosing Mrs. Marteen's cheque for twenty-five thousand dollars. Gard studied the handwriting closely. It was firm, flowing, refined, yet daring, very straight as to alignment and spaced artistically. Good sense, good taste, nice discrimination, he commented. He smiled, tickled by a new idea. He would not give the usual orders in such matters. When a lovely lady inclosed her cheque, begging to remind him of his thoughtful suggestion (mostly mythical) at Mrs. So-and-So's dinner, he cynically deposited the slip, and wrote out another for double the amount, if he believed the lady deserving; if not, a polite note informed the sender that his firm would gladly open an account with her, and he was sure her interests "would receive the best possible attention and advice." In this case he determined to accept the responsibility exactly as it was worded, ignoring the circumstances that had forced his hand. He would make her nest egg hatch out what was required. It should be an honest transaction in spite of its inception. Every dollar of that money should work overtime, for results must come quickly.

He gave his orders and laid his plans. Never had his business interests appealed to him as keenly as at that moment, and never for a moment did he doubt the honesty of the lady's villainy. She would not "hold out on him."

His first care that morning had been to make a luncheon appointment with his lawyer, and to elicit the information that, as far as his attorney knew, the correspondence had been destroyed when received. "As soon as your instructions were carried out, Mr. Gard. Of course, none of us quite realized the changes that were coming—but—what those letters would mean now! Too much care cannot be taken. I've often thought a code might be advisable in the future, when the written word must be relied on."

Gard smiled grimly and agreed. "Those letters would make a pretty basis for blackmail, wouldn't they?

Oh, by the way, you are Victor Mahr's lawyers, aren't you?"

As he had half expected, he surprised a flash of suspicion and knowledge in the other's eyes.

"What makes you speak of him in that connection?" laughed the lawyer.

"I don't," said Gard. "I happened to be playing bridge with him last night, and from something he let fall I gathered your firm had been acting for him. Well, he needs the best legal advice that's to be had, or I miss my guess." He rose and took leave of his friend, entered his motor and was driven rapidly uptown.

Still his thoughts were of Mrs. Marteen, and again unaccountable annoyance possessed him. Confound it! Mahr *had* been held up. Clifton knew about it; that argued that Mahr had taken the facts, whatever they were, to them. Had he told them who it was who threatened him? Then Clifton knew that Mrs. Marteen was a— Hang it! What possible right had he to jump to the wild conviction that Victor Mahr had been blackmailed at all? Because he was a friend of the lady's—a pretty reason that! Did men make friends of— Yes, they did; he intended to himself; why not that hound of a Mahr? Clifton *did* know something. Mahr was just the sort of scoundrel to drag in a woman's name. Why shouldn't he in such a case? Then, with one of his quick changes of mood, he laughed at himself. "I'm jealous because I think I'm not the only victim! It's time I consulted a physician. I'm going dotty. She's a wonder, though, that woman. What a brain, and what a splendid presence! But there's something vital lacking; no soul, no conscience—that's the trouble," he commented inwardly—little dreaming that he exactly voiced the criticism universally passed upon himself. Then his thoughts took a new tack. "Wonder what the daughter is like? I'll have to hunt her up. It's a joke—if it is on me! Must see my *débutante*. After all, if I'm paying, I ought to look her over. She's going to the Opera—in Denning's box—h'm!"

Gard broke two engagements, and at nine o'clock found himself wandering

through the corridor back of the first tier at the Metropolitan. Its bare convolutions were as resonant as a sea shell. Vast and vague murmurs of music, presages of melodies, undulated through the passages, palpitated like the living breath of Euterpe, suppressed excitement lurked in every turn, there was a throb and glow in each pulsating touch of unseen instruments. Gard found his heart tightening, his nostrils expanding. A flash of the divine fire of youth leaped through his veins. Adventure suddenly beckoned to him—the lure of the unknown, of the magic of algebra in human equation. So great was his enjoyment that he savored it as one savors a dainty morsel, lingering over it, fearful that the next taste may destroy the perfect flavor.

He paced the corridor, nodding here and there, pausing for a moment to chat with this or that personage, affable, noncommittal, Chesterfieldian, handsome and distinguished in his clean, silver-touched middle age.

Inwardly he was fretting for their appearance—his *débutante* and Mme. Robin Hood. Of course they must do the conventional thing and be late. But to his pleased surprise, just as the overture was drawing to its close, he saw Denning and his wife approaching. Behind them he discerned the finely held head and chiseled features of the Lady of Compulsion, and close beside her a slender, girlish figure, shrouded in a silver and ermine cloak, a tinsel scarf half shrouding a flower face, gentle, tremulous and inspired—a Jeanne d'Arc of high birth and luxurious rearing. Something tightened about his heart. The child's very appearance was dramatic coupled with the presence of her mother. What the one lacked, the other possessed in its clearest essence.

With a hasty greeting to Denning and his diamond-sprinkled spouse, Gard turned with real cordiality to Mrs. Marteen.

"This *is* a pleasure!" He beamed with sincerity. "Dear madam, present me to your lovely daughter. We must be friends, Miss Dorothy. Your very wise and resourceful mamma has given me

many an interesting hour—more so than she has ever dreamed, I believe.”

He turned and followed them to the box and assisted the ladies with their wraps. Dorothy turned upon him a pair of violet eyes, that at the mention of her mother's name had lighted with adoration.

“Isn't she wonderful!” she murmured, casting a bashful glance at Mrs. Marteen; then she added with simple gratefulness: “I'm glad you're friends.” In her child's fashion she had looked him over and approved.

A glow of pride suffused him. The obeisance of the kings of finance was not so sweet to his natural vanity. “She's one in a million,” he answered heartily. “She should have been a man—and yet we would have lost much in that case—you, for instance.” He turned toward Mrs. Marteen. “I congratulate you,” he smiled. “She's just the sort of a girl that *should* have a good time—the very best the world can give her; the world owes it. But aren't you”—and he lowered his voice—“just a little afraid of those ecstatic eyes? Dear child, she must keep all the pink and gold illusions—” The end of his sentence he spoke really to himself. But an expression in his hearer's face brought him to sudden consciousness. Quite unexpectedly he had surprised fear in the classic marble of the goddess face. The woman, who had not hesitated to commit crime, feared the contact of the world for her child. It was a curious revelation. All that was best, most generous and kindly in his nature rose to the surface, and his smile was the rare one that endeared him to his friends. “Let her have every pleasure that comes her way,” he added. “By the way, I'm sending you our box for Monday night. I hope you will avail yourself of it. My sister will join you, and perhaps you will all give me the pleasure of your company at Delmonico's afterward.”

She hesitated for a moment, her eyes turning involuntarily toward the girl. Then the human dimple enriched her cheeks, and it was with real *camaraderie* that she nodded an acceptance.

His attitude was humbly grateful.

“I'll ask the Dennings, too,” he continued. “They're due elsewhere, I know, but they could join us.”

The curtain was already rising and Gard, excusing himself, found his way to the masculine sanctuary, the directors' box, of which he rarely availed himself, and from a shadowy corner observed his *débutante* and her beautiful mother through his powerful opera glasses. Of a truth, the situation was amazing. He found himself taking a throbbing interest in the visitors at the loge opposite. He was as interested in Dorothy Marteen's admirers as any fond father could be; and yet his eyes turned with a strange, fascinated jealousy to the older woman's loveliness. Suddenly he drew in the focus of his glasses. A face had come within the rim of his observation—the face of a man sitting in the row in front of the directors' box. That man, too, had his glasses turned toward the group on the other side of the diamond horseshoe, and the look on his face was not pleasant to see. A lean, triumphant smile curled his heavy purple lips, the radiating wrinkles at the corner of his eyes were drawn upward in a Mephistophelian hardness.

It was Victor Mahr. His expression suddenly changed to one of intense disgust, as a tall young man entered the Denning box and bent in evident admiration over Dorothy's smiling face. Victor Mahr rose from his seat, and with a curt nod to Gard, who feigned interest elsewhere, disappeared into the corridor.

III

MRS. MARTEEN stood at her desk, a mammoth affair of Jacobean type, holding in her hand a sheet of crested paper, scrawled over in a large, tempestuous hand.

MY DEAR MRS. MARTEEN:

If you will be so good as to drop in at the library at five, it will give me great pleasure to go over with you the details of my stewardship. The commission with which you honored me has, I think, been well directed to an excellent result. Moreover, a little chat with you will be, as always, a real pleasure to—

Yours in all admiration,

J. MARCUS GARD.

P.S.—I suggest your coming here, as the details of business are best transacted in the quiet of a business office, and I therefore crave your presence and indulgence.—J. M. G.

Mrs. Marteen was dressing for the street; her hands were gloved, her sable muff swung from a gem-studded chain, her veil was nicely adjusted; yet she hesitated, her eyes upon a busy silver clock that already marked the appointed hour. The room was large, wainscoted in dark paneling; a capacious fireplace jutted far out, and was made further conspicuous by two settees of worm-eaten oak. The chairs that backed along the walls were of stalwart pattern. A collection of English silver tankards was the chief decoration, save straight hangings of Cordova leather at the windows, and a Spanish embroidery, tarnished with age, that swung beside the door. Hardly a woman's room, and yet feminine in its minor touches; the galooned red velvet cushions of the Venetian armchair, the violets that from every available place shed their fresh perfume on the quiet air, a summer window box crowded with hyacinths, the wicker basket, home of a languishing Pekinese spaniel, tucked under one corner of the table. Mrs. Marteen continued to hesitate, and the hands of the clock to travel relentlessly.

Suddenly drawing herself erect, she walked with no uncertain tread to the right hand wall of the mantel and pushed back a double panel of the wainscoting, revealing the muzzle of a steel safe let into the masonry of the wall. A few deft twirls opened the combination, and the metal door swung outward. Within the recess the pigeonholes were crammed with papers and morocco jewel cases. Loosing a secret spring, a second door jarred open in the left inner wall. From this receptacle she withdrew several packets of letters and a set of plates with their accompanying prints. Over them all she slipped a heavy rubber band, laid them aside and closed the hiding place with methodical care. The compromising documents disappeared within the warm hollow of her muff, and with a last glance around, Mrs. Marteen unlocked the door and descended to the

street, where her walnut-brown limousine awaited her. Her face, which had been vivid with emotion, took on its accustomed mask of cold perfection, and when she was ushered into the anxiously awaiting presence of Marcus Gard, she was the same perfectly poised machine, wound up to execute a certain series of acts, that she had been on the occasion of her former visit. Of their friendly acquaintance of the last ten days there was no trace. They were two men of business met to consult upon a matter of money. The host was thoroughly disappointed. For ten days he had lost no opportunity of following up both Dorothy and her mother. Dorothy had responded with frank-hearted liking; Mrs. Marteen had suffered herself to be interested.

"How's my débutante?" he asked cordially, as Mrs. Marteen entered.

"She's very well, thank you," the marble personage replied. "I came in answer to your note."

"Rather late," he complained. "I've been waiting for you anxiously, most anxiously—but now you're here, I'm ready to forgive. Do you know, this is the first opportunity I have had, since you honored me before, of having one word in private with you?"

She ignored his remark. "I have brought the correspondence of which I spoke."

"I never doubted it, my dear lady. But before we proceed to conclude this little deal, I want to ask you a question or two. Surely you will not let me languish of curiosity. I want to know—tell me—how did you ever hit upon this plan of yours?"

She unbent from her rigid attitude and answered, almost as if the words were drawn from her against her will: "After Martin, my husband, died—I—I found myself poor, quite to my astonishment, and with Dorothy to support. Among his effects—" She paused and turned scarlet; she was angry at herself for answering, angry at him for daring to question her thus intimately.

"You found—" prompted Gard.

"Well—" she hesitated, and then continued boldly—"some letters from

—never mind whom. They showed me that my husband had been most cruelly robbed and mistreated; men had traded upon his honor, and had ruined him. Then and there I saw my way. This man—these men—had political aspirations. Their plans were maturing. I waited. Then I wondered if they would care to have the matter in their opponent's hands. The swindle would be good newspaper matter. They replied that they would mind very much. I succeeded in getting back something of what Martin had been cheated out of—"

He beamed approval. "And mighty clever and plucky of you. And then?"

This time the delayed explosion of her anger came. "How dare you question me? How dare you pry into my life?"

"You dared to pry into mine, remember," he snapped.

"For a definite and established purpose," she retorted; "and let us proceed, if you will."

Gard shifted his bulk and grasped the arms of his chair.

"As you please. You deposited with me the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars. I personally took charge of that account, and invested it for you. The steps of these transactions I will ask you to follow."

"Is it necessary?"

"It is. Also that now you set before me the—autographs, together with their reproductions of every kind, on this table, and permit me to verify the collection by the list supplied by my lawyers."

She frowned, and taking the packet from its resting place, unslipped the band and spread out its contents.

"They are all there," she said slowly, and there was hurt pride in her voice.

Without stopping to consult either memoranda or the letters, he swept the whole together, and, striding to the fireplace, consigned them to the flames.

"The plates!" she gasped, rising and following him. "They must be destroyed completely."

He smiled at her grimly. "I'll take care of that. And now, if you will come

to the table, I will explain your account with my firm. I bought L. U. & Y. for you at the opening, the day following our compact, feeling sure we would get at least a five-point rise, and that would be earning a bit of interest until I could put you in on a good move. I had private information the following day in Forward Express stock. I sold for you, and bought F. E. If you have followed that market you will see what happened—a thirty-point rise. Then I drew out, cashed up and clapped the whole thing into Union Short. I had to wait three days for that, but when it came—there, look at the figures for yourself. Your account with Morley & Gard stands you in one hundred thousand dollars, and it will be more if you don't disturb the present investment for a few days."

Mrs. Marteen's eyes were wide.

"What are you doing this for?" she said calmly. "That wasn't the bargain. I'll not touch a penny more."

"Why did I do it? Because I won't have any question of blackmail between us. Like the good friend that you are, you gave me something which might otherwise have been to my hurt. On the other hand, I invested your money for you wisely, honestly, sanely and with all the best of my experience and knowledge. It's clean money there, Mrs. Marteen, and I'm ready to do as much again whenever you need it. You say you won't take it—why, it's yours. You must. I want to be friends. I don't want this thing lying between us, crossing our thoughts. If I ask you impertinent questions, which I undoubtedly shall, I want them to have the sanction of good will. I want you to know that I feel nothing but kindness for you—nothing but pleasure in your company."

He paused, confounded by the blank wall of her apparent indifference. Marcus Gard was used to having his friendly offices solicited. That his overtures should be rebuffed was incredible. Moreover, he had looked for feminine softening, had expected the moist eye and quivering lip as a matter of course; it seemed the inevitable answer to that

cue. It was not forthcoming. Again the conviction of some great psychic loss disturbed him.

"My dear Mr. Gard," the level, colorless voice was saying, "I fear we are quite beside the subject, are we not? I am not requesting anything. I am not putting myself under obligations to you; I trust you understand."

Had an explosion wrecked the building, without a doubt Marcus Gard, the resourceful and energetic leader of men, would without an instant's hesitation have headed the fire brigade. Before this moral bomb he remained silent, paralyzed, uncertain of himself and of all the world. He could not adjust himself to that angle of the situation. Mrs. Marteen somehow conveyed to his distracted senses that blackmail was a mere detail of business, and "being under obligations" a heinous crime. At that rate the number of criminals on his list was legion, and certainly appeared unconscious of the enormity of their offense. It dawned upon him that he, the Great Man, was being put in his place; that his highly laudable desire for righteousness was being treated as forward and rather ridiculous posing. The buccaneer had outpointed him and taken the wind out of his sails, which now flapped ignominiously. The pause due to his mental rudderlessness continued till Mrs. Marteen herself broke the silence.

"You appear to consider my attitude an inexplicable one. It is merely unexpected. I feel sure that when you have considered the matter you will see, as I do, that business affairs must be free from any hint—of—shall we say, favoritisms?"

Gard found his voice, his temper and his curiosity at the same instant.

"No, hang it, I *don't* see!"

She looked at him with tolerance as a mother upon an excited child.

"I have specified a certain sum as the price of certain articles. You accepted my terms. I do not ask you for a bonus. I do not ask you to take upon yourself to rehabilitate me in your own estimation. I cannot accept this cheque, Mr. Gard, however I may appreciate your gener-

osity." She pushed the yellow paper toward him.

The action angered him. "If," he roared, "you had obtained these by any mere chance, I might see your position. But according to your own account you obtained them by elaborate fraud, feeling sure of their eventual value; and yet you sit up and say you don't care to be reinstated in my regard—just as if money could do that—you—"

She interrupted him. "Then why this?" and she held out the statement. He was silent. "I repeat," she said, "I will not be under obligations to you or to anyone." She rose with finality, picked up the statement and cheque, crossed to the fire and dropped both the papers on the blazing logs. "If you will have the kindness to send me the purchase money, plus the sum I consigned to your keeping—as a blind to others, not to ourselves—I shall be very much indebted to you."

Gard watched her with varying emotions. "Well," he said slowly, "that money belongs to you. I made it for you and you're going to have it. In the meantime, as you may require the 'purchase money,' as you call it, to settle bills for soda water and gardenias, I'll make you out another cheque; the remainder will stay with the firm on deposit for you—whether you wish it or no. This is one time when I'm not to be dictated to—no, nor blackmailed." He spoke roughly and glanced at her quickly. Not an eyelash quivered. His voice changed. "I wish I understood you," he grumbled. "I wish I did. But perhaps that would, after all, be a great pity. You're an extraordinary woman, Mrs. Marteen. You've 'got me going,' as the college boys say—but I like you, hanged if I don't. And I repeat, at the risk of having you sneer at me again, I meant every word I said, and I still mean it; and I'm sorry you don't see it that way."

One of her rare smiles glorified her face.

"Please don't think I reject your proffered friendship," she said, extending her hand.

He would have taken it in both of his, but something in her manner warned

him to meet it with the straight, firm grasp of manly assurance.

"*Au revoir, mon ami.*" She nodded and was gone.

For several moments he stood by the door that had closed after her. Then he chuckled, frowned, chuckled again and sat down once more before his work table.

IV

THE salons of Mrs. Marteen's elaborate apartment were gay with flowers and palms, sweet with perfumes and throbbing with music. Dorothy, an airy dazzling figure in white, her face radiant with innocent excitement, stood by her mother, whose marble beauty had warmed with happiness as Galatea may have thrilled to life. Everyone who was anybody crowded the rooms, laughing, gossiping, congratulating, nibbling at dainties and sipping beverages. The throng ebbed, renewed, passed from room to room, to return again for a final look at the lovely débutante and a final word with her no less attractive mother. A dozen distinguished men, both young and old, sought to ingratiate themselves, but Dorothy's joyous heart beat only for the day itself—her coming out, the launching of her little ship upon the bright waters frequented by Sirens, Argonauts and other delightful and adventurous people hitherto but shadow fictions. It was as exciting and wonderful as Christmas. She had been showered with presents, buried in roses. Everyone was filled with friendly thoughts of which she was the center. There was no envy, hatred or malice in all the world.

Marcus Gard advanced into the drawing room, the sound of his name, announced at the door, causing sudden and free passage to the center of attraction. He beamed upon Mrs. Marteen with real pleasure in her stately loveliness, and turned to Dorothy, who, her face alight with greeting, came frankly toward him. From the moment of their first meeting there had been instant understanding and liking. Gard took her outstretched hands with an almost fatherly thrill.

"You are undoubtedly a pleasing

sight, Miss Marteen," he smiled; "and a long life and a merry one to you. Your daughter does you credit, dear lady," he added, turning to his hostess.

Dorothy, bubbling over with enthusiasm, claimed his hand again. "It was so sweet of you to send me that necklace in those wonderful flowers. See—I'm wearing it." She fondled a slender seed pearl rope at her throat. "Mother told me it was far too beautiful and I must send it back. But I was most undutiful. I said I wouldn't—just wouldn't. I knew you picked it out for me yourself—now, didn't you?" He nodded somewhat whimsically. "There! I told mother so; and it would be rude, most rude, not to accept it—wouldn't it?"

He laughed gruffly. "It certainly would—and, really, you know your mother has a mania for refusing things. Why, I owe her—never mind, I won't tell you now—but I would have felt very much hurt, Miss Débutante, if you'd thrown back my little present. I'm sure I selected something quite modest and inconspicuous. . . . Dear me, I'm blocking the whole doorway. Pardon me."

He stepped back and nodded here and there to an acquaintance. Finally catching sight of his sister in the dining room, he joined her, and stood for a moment gazing at the commonplace comedy of presentations.

Miss Gard yawned. "My dear Marcus, who ever heard of your attending a tea? Really, I didn't know you knew these people so well."

Gard was glad of this opportunity. His sister had a praiseworthy manner of distributing his slightest word—of which he not infrequently took advantage.

"Well, you see, I was indebted to Marteen for a number of kindnesses in the early days, though we'd rather drifted apart before he died—had some slight business differences, in fact. But I'd like to do all I can for his widow and that really sweet child of theirs. I have a small nest egg in trust for her—some investments I advised Mrs. Marteen to make. Who is that chap who's so devoted?" he asked suddenly, switching the subject, as his quick eye noted the change of Dorothy's expression under

the admiring glances of a tall young man of athletic proportions, whose face seemed strangely familiar.

Miss Gard lorgnetted. "That? Oh, that's only Teddy Mahr, Victor Mahr's son. He's a 'whaleback'—I think that's what they call it—on the Yale football team. They say that he's the one thing, besides himself, that the old cormorant really cares about."

Marcus Gard stiffened, and his jaw protruded with a peculiar bunching of the cheek muscles, characteristic of him in his moments of irritation. He looked again at Dorothy, absorbed in the conversation of the "whaleback" from Yale, recognized the visitor at the Denning box, and, with an untranslatable grunt, abruptly took his departure, leaving his sister to wonder over the strangeness of his actions.

Once out of the house, his anger blazed freely, and his chauffeur received a lecture on the driving and care of machines that was as undeserved as it was vigorous and emphatic.

Moved by a strange mingling of anger, curiosity and jealousy, Gard's first action on entering his library was to telephone to a well known detective agency—no surprising thing on his part, for not unfrequently he made use of their services to obtain sundry details as to the movements of his opponents, and when, as often happened, cranks threatened the thorny path of wealth and prominence, he had found protection with the plain clothes men.

"Jordan," he growled over the wire, "I want Brencherly up here right away. Is he there? . . . All right. I want some information he may be able to give me offhand. If not—well, send him now."

He hung up the receiver and paced the room, his eyes on the rug, his hands behind his back, disgusted and angry with his own anger and disgust.

Half an hour had passed, when a young man of dapper appearance was ushered in. Gard looked up, frowning, into the mild blue eyes of the detective.

"Hello, Brencherly. Know Victor Mahr?"

"Yes," said the youth.

"Tell me about him," snapped Gard "Sit down."

Brencherly sat. "Well, he's the head of the lumber people. Rated at six millions. Got one son, named Theodore; goes to Yale. Wife was Mary Theobald, of Cincinnati—"

Gard interrupted. "I don't want the 'who's who,' Brencherly, or I wouldn't have sent for you. I want to know the worst about him. Cut loose."

"Well, his deals haven't been square, you know. He's had two or three nasty suits against him; he's got more enemies than you can shake a stick at. His confidential lawyer is Twickenbaur, the biggest scoundrel unhung. Of course nobody knows that; Twickenbaur's reputation is too bad—Mahr goes to *your* lawyers, apparently."

"There isn't any blackmail in any of *that*," the older man snarled.

"Oh!" cried the youth, his blue eyes lighting. "Oh, it's blackmail you want! Well, the only thing that looks that way is a story that nobody has been able to substantiate. We heard it as we hear lots of things that don't get out; but there was a yarn that Mahr was a bigamist; that his first wife was living when he married Miss Theobald. She died when the boy was born, and in that case she was never his legal wife, and of course now never can be. The other woman's dead, too, they say; but who's to prove it? That would be a fine tale for the coin, if anyone had the goods to show."

"I suppose the office looked that up when they got it, didn't they? Good for the coin, eh? What did you find?"

The informant actually blushed. "You aren't accusing us, Mr. Gard!"

"Accusing nothing. I know a few things, Brencherly, remember. Baker Allen told me your office held him up good and plenty to turn in a different report when his wife employed you, and you 'got the goods on him.' Now, don't give me any bluff. I want facts, and I pay you for them, don't I? Well, when you got that story, you looked it up hard, didn't you?"

Brencherly, thoroughly cowed, nodded assent. "But we couldn't get a line

on it anywhere. If there were any proofs, somebody else had them—that's all."

"U'm!" said Marcus, and sat a moment silent. When he spoke again it was with an apparent frankness that would have deceived the devil himself. "See here, I'll tell you my reason for all this, so perhaps you can answer more intelligently. Martin Marteen was a friend of mine, and I'm interested in his little daughter, who has just come out. Theodore Mahr is attentive to her, and I'm not keen about it, and what you tell me about his father doesn't make me any happier. What sort of a woman is Mrs. Marteen—from your point of view? Of course I know her well socially, but what's her rating with you?"

"A1, sir," Brencherly answered promptly. "Exceptionally fine woman—very intelligent. I should say that, with a word from you, she ought to be able to handle the situation, and any girl living. But the boy's all right, Mr. Gard, even if Mahr isn't. And after all, there may not be a word of truth in that romance I spun to you. We couldn't land a thing. What made us think there might be something in it was that we got it second hand from an old servant of Mahr's. He told the man that told us; but the old boy's gone, too."

Gard rose from his chair and resumed his pacing. Brencherly remained seated, patiently waiting. Presently Gard turned on him.

"That'll do, Brencherly. You may go; and don't let me catch you tipping Mahr off that I've been having you rate him, do you understand?"

The detective sprang to his feet with alacrity. "Oh, no, Mr. Gard—never a word. You know, sir, you're one of our very best clients."

Left alone, Gard sat down wearily, ran his hands through his hair, then held his throbbing temples between his clenched fists. Somehow, on this slender evidence, that was no evidence, in fact, he was convinced of the truth of Mahr's perfidy; convinced that the lady rated A1 by the keenest detective bureau in the country had obtained the proofs of guilt and used them with the same perfect business sagacity she had used in his

own case. It sickened him. Somehow he could forgive her handling such a case as his. It was purely commercial; but this other was uglier stuff. His soul rebelled. He would not have it so; he would not believe—and yet he was convinced against his own logic. He had tried to cheat the arithmetic when he had tried to make her extortion money an honestly made acquisition. And she had refused to be a party to the flimsy self-deception.

Mrs. Marteen was a blackmailer, an extortioner—that was the truth, the truth that he would not let himself recognize. Her depredations probably had much wider scope than he guessed. He must save her from herself; he must somehow reach the submerged personality and awaken her to the hideousness of that other, the soulless, heartless automaton that schemed and executed crimes with mechanical exactitude. He took a long breath of determination, and again grinned at the farce he was playing for his own benefit. Through repetition he was beginning to believe in the fiction of his former intimacy with Marteen. True, he had known him slightly, had once or twice snatched a hasty luncheon in his company at one of his clubs; but far from liking each other, the two men had been fundamentally antagonistic. Neither was Dorothy an excuse for his peculiar state of mind. He was drawn to her with strong protective yearning. Her childlike beauty pleased him. He wished she were his daughter, or a little sister to pet and spoil. But it was not for her sake that he savagely longed to make the mother into something different, "remolded nearer to his heart's desire." Was it the woman herself, or her enigmatic dual personality that held him? He wished he knew. He found his mind divided, his emotions many and at cross purposes. His keen, almost clairvoyant, intuition was at fault for once. It sent no sure signal through the fog of his troubled heart.

How would it all end? Ah, how would it end? He sensed the situation as one of climax. It could not quietly dissolve itself and be absorbed in the sea of time and forgotten commonplace.

As an outlet for his mental discomfort, his restless spirit busied itself in hating Victor Mahr. He had always disliked the man; now he malignantly resented his very existence; he became the personification of the thing he most wished to forget—the victimizing power of the woman who had enthralled him. Gard had met the one element he could not control or change—the past; and his conquering soul raged at its own impotence.

"There shall be no more of this!" he said aloud. "She sha'n't again. I'll—"

"I'll what?" the demon in his brain jeered at him. "What will you do? She will not 'be under obligations.' Perhaps, even, she likes her strange profession; perhaps she finds the delight of battle, that you know so well, in pitting her wits against the brains of the mighty; perhaps she has a cynic soul that finds a savage joy in running down the faults of the seemingly faultless—running them to earth and taking her profit therefrom. Who are you, Marcus Gard, to cavil at the lust of conquest—to sneer at the controlling of destinies?"

"I won't be beaten," declared his ego, "even if I have no weapon. I'll search till I find the way to the citadel, and if there is none open, I'll smash one through!"

V

"MRS. MARTIN MARTEEN requests the pleasure of Mr. Marcus Gard's company at dinner"—the usual engraved invitation, with below a girlish scrawl: "You'll come, won't you? It's my very last dinner before we go South.—D."

He took a stubby quill, which, for some occult reason, he preferred for his intimate correspondence, and scribbled: "Of course, little friend. The crowned heads can wait." He tossed the envelope on the pile for special delivery, and speared the invitation on a letter file.

Two months had passed, and he was no nearer the solution of the problem he had set himself. His affection for the girl had deepened—become ratified by his experience of her sweetness and in-

telligence. They were "pally," as she put it, happily contented in each other's society. On the other hand, the fascination that Mrs. Marteen exercised over him was far from being placid enjoyment. She continued to vex his heart and irritate his imagination. Her tolerance of young Mahr's attentions to Dorothy drove him distracted, his only relief being that Miss Gard, his sister, swayed, as always, by his slightest wish, had developed a most maternal delight in Dorothy's presence, and was doing all in her power to make the girl's season a most successful one; also, in accord with his obvious desire—her influence was antagonistic to Mahr, his son and his motor car, his house and his flowers, everything that was his; in spite of which, Dorothy's manner toward Teddy Mahr was undoubtedly one of encouragement. Honesty compelled Gard to own that he could not find in the child the echo of the objectionable sire. Perhaps the long dead mother, who was never a lawful wife, had, by some retributive turn of justice, endowed him wholly with her own qualities. Gard could almost find it in his breast to like the big, large-hearted, gentle boy, but for a final irony of fate—the son's blind adoration of his father, and that father's obvious but helpless dislike of the impending romance. Every element of contradiction seemed to be present in the tangle and to bind the older watchers to silence. What could anyone do or say? And meanwhile, in the pause before the storm, Dorothy's violet eyes smiled into her Teddy's brown devoted ones with tender approval.

One move only had Gard made with success, and the doing thereof had given him supreme satisfaction. The account opened in his office in Mrs. Marteen's name had been transferred to Dorothy, and with such perfect publicity that Mrs. Marteen was unable to raise objections. Right and left he told the tale of his having desired to advise the widow of his old friend of his successful operations, of Mrs. Marteen's refusal to accept her just gains as "too great," and his determination that the account, transferred to the daughter, should reach its

proper destination. The first result of his outwitting of the beneficiary was a doubling of the usual letters inclosing a cheque and requesting advice. The secretary was plainly disgusted, but Gard grimly paid the price of his checkmate, and by his generosity certainly precluded any accusation of favoritism. As he read Dorothy's note on the invitation, he chuckled at the thought of his own cleverness, and rejoiced in the knowledge that his débutante had become somewhat his ward and protégée.

The bell of his private telephone rang—only his intimates had the number of that wire—and he raised the receiver with sudden conviction that the voice he would hear was Dorothy's. "Well, my dear?" he said. There was a little gurgle, and an obviously disguised voice replied:

"And who do you think this is?"

"Why, the queen of the débutantes, of course. I felt it in my bones; it was a pleasurable sensation."

"Wrong," the voice came back, "quite wrong. This is the superintendent of the Old Ladies' Home, and we want autographed photographs of you for all the old ladies' dressers—to cheer them up, you know."

"Certainly, my dear madam; they shall be sent at once. To your apartment, I suppose. Is there anything else?"

"Yes; you might bring them yourself. Did you know that mother has been ordered off to Bermuda at once? The doctor says she's dreadfully run down. She won't let me go with her. She wants me to do a lot of things; and then in three weeks we all go South. Mother's doctor says she mustn't wait. Isn't it a bore? And Tante Lydia is coming to-day to chaperon me. Did you get my invitation?"

Gard's heart sank. "Dear me! That's bad news. How long will your mother be gone?"

"Oh, just the voyage and straight home again. But do come in this afternoon and have tea; perhaps you could persuade her to stay a week there—she won't obey me."

"They are very insubordinate in the Old Ladies' Home. I'll drop in this afternoon. Good-bye, my dear."

He hung up the receiver and glowered. "Not well! Mrs. Marteen in the doctor's care!" He could not associate her perfection with illness of any kind. It gave him a distinct pang, and for the first time a feeling of protective tenderness. This instantly translated itself into a lavish order of violets, and a mental note to see that her stateroom was made beautiful for her voyage.

Adding his signature to the pile of letters that Saunders handed him served to pass the moments till he could officially declare himself free for the day and be driven to the abode of the two beings who had so absorbed his interest.

He found Mrs. Marteen reclining on a *chaise-longue* in her library sitting room, the Pekinese spaniel in her lap and Dorothy by her side. She looked weary, but not ill, and Gard felt a glow of comfort.

"Dear lady, I came at once. Dorothy advised me of your impending journey, and led me to believe you were not well. But I am reassured—you do not seem a drooping flower."

Mrs. Marteen laughed. "How 1830! Couldn't you put it into a madrigal? It really is absurd, though, sending me off like this. But they threaten me with nerves—fancy that—nerves! And never having had an attack of that sort, of course I'm terrified. I shall leave my butterfly in good hands, however. My sister is to take my place; and I sha'n't be gone long, you know."

"We hope not, don't we, Dorothy? What boat do you honor, and what date?"

Mrs. Marteen hesitated. "I'm not sure. The *Bermudian* sails Thursday. If I cannot go then, and that is possible, I may take the *Cecelia*, and make the Caribbean trip. It's a little longer, but on my return I would join Dorothy and Mrs. Trevor, crossing directly from Bermuda to Florida. It's absurd, isn't it, to play the invalid! But insomnia is really getting its hold on me. A good sleep would be a novelty just now, and bromides depress me, so—there you are! I suppose I must take the doctor's advice and my maid, and fly for my health's sake."

In spite of the natural tone and her apparent frankness, Gard remained unconvinced. He could not have explained why. All his life he had found his intuitions superior to his logical deductions. They had led him to his present exalted position and had kept him there. No sooner had this inner self refused to accept Mrs. Marteen's story than his mind began supplying reasons for her departure—and the very first held him spellbound. Was it another move in her perpetual game? Was she on the track of someone's secret? She had doubtless gone to Canada in search for the proofs of Mahr's marriage. Was her scheming mind now following some new clue that must lead to the discovery of a hidden or forgotten crime—the burial place of some well entombed family skeleton? He turned cold and shivered.

Mrs. Marteen observed him narrowly.

"Mr. Gard is cold, Dorothy. Send for the tea, dear—or will you have something else? Really, *you* look like the patient who should seek climate and rest."

"Perhaps you're right," he said slowly. "Perhaps I *will* go—perhaps with you. It would be pleasant to have your society for so many weeks, uninterrupted and almost alone. I'll think of it—if I can arrange my affairs."

He had been watching her closely, and seemed to surprise in the depths of her eyes and the slow assuming of her impenetrable manner that his suggestion was far from receiving approval.

"But, my dear sir," she answered, "much as that would be my pleasure, would it be wise for you? Everyone tells me the next few weeks will be crucial. Your advice may be needed in Washington."

"Well, I suppose it will," he retorted almost angrily. "But I've a pretty good idea what the result will be, and my sails are trimmed."

"Then do come," she cried cordially; "it will be delightful!" She had read the meaning of his tone; knew quite as well as he that her words had brought home to him the impossibility of his leaving. She could afford to be pressing.

More and more convinced of some ulterior motive in Mrs. Marteen's departure, his irritation made him gruff. Even Dorothy, seeing his mood, retired to the far corner of the room, and eyed him with surprise above her embroidery. Feeling the discord of his present mood, he rose to take his leave.

"Do arrange to come," smiled Mrs. Marteen, with just a touch of irony in her clear voice.

"You are very kind," he answered; "but, somehow, I'm not so sure you want me."

He bowed himself out and, sore-hearted, sought the crowded solitude of the Metropolitan Club. His next move was characteristic. Having got Gordon on the wire, he requested as complete a list as possible of the passengers to sail by the *Bermudian* and the *Cecelia*. A new possibility had presented itself. Perhaps the psychological moment in someone else's affairs was eventuating, something for which she had long planned the dénouement. That person might be sailing. If only he could accompany her, perhaps in the isolated world of a steamer's life, he might bring his will to bear—force from her promise to cease from her pernicious activities, and an acceptance of his future aid in all financial matters—two things he had found it impossible to accomplish, or even propose, heretofore. She, also, was right: the moment was critical, and his presence might be necessary in Washington at any moment.

When, later that night, the lists were delivered at his home, he spent a throbbing half-hour. There were several possibilities. Mrs. Allison was Bermuda bound; so was Morgan Beresford. Both had fortunes, a whispered past and ambitions. The Honorable Fortescue, the wealthy and impeccable Senator, the shining light of "practical politics," was Havana bound on the *Cecelia*, so was Max Brutgal, the many-millioned copper baron. Mrs. Allison he discarded as a possibility. He was sure that Mme. Robin Hood would disdain such an easy victim and refuse to hound one of her own sex. Looking over the list, he singled out Brutgal, if it were the *Cecelia*,

and Beresford, if it were the *Bermudian*. Beresford was devoted to the lovely and somewhat severe Mrs. Claigh. He might be more than willing to suppress some event in his patchwork past.

Gard threw the lists from him angrily. After all, what right had he to interfere? What business of his was it which fly was elected to feed the spider? He went to bed, and passed a sleepless night trying to determine, nevertheless, which was the doomed insect. He would have liked to prevent the ships from leaving the harbor, or invent a situation that would make it as impossible for Mrs. Marteen to leave as it was for him to accompany her.

A few days later, when Mrs. Marteen finally announced her intention of departing on the longer cruise, Gard seriously contemplated a copper raid that would keep Brutgal at the ticker. Then he as furiously abandoned the idea, washed his hands of the whole affair and did not go near Mrs. Marteen for three days. At the end of that time, having thoroughly punished himself, he relented, and continued to shower the lady with attentions until the very moment of her final leave taking. He accompanied her to the steamer, saw her gasp of pleasure at the bower of violets prepared for her and formally accepted the post of sub-guardian to Dorothy.

As the tugs dragged out the unwilling vessel from her berth, he caught a glimpse of Brutgal, his coarse, heavy face set off by an enormous sealskin collar, joining Mrs. Marteen at the rail and bidding blatantly for her attention. Gard turned his back, took Dorothy by the arm, and, in spite of her protestations, left the wharf. His motor took Tante Lydia and Dorothy to their apartment, where he left them with many assurances of his desire to be of service.

He sent a wireless message and was comforted. He wondered how, in the old days that were only yesterdays, people could have endured separation without any means of communication, and he blessed the name of Marconi as cordially as he cursed the name of Brutgal. To exasperate him further, the rest of

the day seemed obsessed by Victor Mahr. He was in the elevator that took him up to his office; he was at the club in the afternoon; he was a guest at the Chamber of Commerce banquet in the evening, and was placed opposite Marcus Gard. Despite his desire to let the man alone, he could not resist the temptation to talk with him.

Mahr, whatever else he might be, was no fool, and even as Gard seemed a prey to nervous irritation, so Mahr appeared to experience a bitter pleasure in parrying his adversary's vicious thrusts and lunging at every opening in the other's arguments. Both men appeared to ease some inner turbulence, for they calmed down as the dinner progressed, and ended the evening in abstraction and silence, broken as they parted by Gard's sudden question:

"And how's that good-looking son of yours, Mahr?"

Mahr shot an underbrow glance at Gard, and took his time to answer.

"If he does what I want him to," he said at last, "he'll take a year or two out West and learn the lumber business—and I think he will."

"Good idea," said Gard curtly. "Good night."

One day of restlessness succeeded another. Ill at ease, Gard felt himself waiting—for what? It was the strain of anxiety, such as a miner feels deep in the heart of the earth, knowing that far down the black corridor the dynamite has been placed and the fuse laid. Why was the expected explosion delayed? One must not go forward to learn. One must sit still and wait. A thousand times he asked himself the meaning of this latent dread. He set it down to his suspicions of Mrs. Marteen's departure. Then why this fibril anxiety never to be long beyond call? Surely, and the demon in his brain laughed with amusement, he did not expect her to send him a cryptic wireless—"Everything arranged; operation a success; appendix removed without opposition," or "Patient unmanageable; must use anesthetic."

Four days had passed, four miserable days, relieved only by a few pleasant

hours with Dorothy and the enjoyment he always found in watching her keen delight in every entertainment. He went everywhere, where he felt sure of seeing her, and could he have removed Teddy Mahr from the obviously reserved place at Dorothy's side, he could have enjoyed those moments almost without the undercurrent of his troubled fears. That Mahr was rebelliously angry at the situation was evident. Gard had seen the look in his eyes on more than one occasion, and it boded evil to someone. What had he meant when he spoke of his son's probable absence of a year or more "to study the lumber business"? Gard approached the young man and found him quite innocent of any such plan.

"Oh, yes," he had answered, "father's keen on my being what he calls practical, but," and he had smiled frankly at his questioner, "I wouldn't leave now—not for the proud possession of every tree, flat or standing, this side of the Pacific."

Dorothy, when questioned, blushed and smiled and evaded, assuring Gard that of all the men she had met that season he alone came up to her ideal, and employed every artifice a woman uses between the age of nine and ninety, when she does not want to give an answer that answers. The very character of her replies, however, convinced Gard that there was more than a passing interest in her preference. There was something sweetly ingenuous in her evasions, a softness in her violet eyes at the mention of Teddy's prosaic name that was not to be misunderstood. Gard sighed. Still the sense of impending danger oppressed him. He found himself neglectful of his many and vital interests. He took himself severely in hand, and set himself to unrelenting work, fixing his attention on the matters in hand as if he would drive a nail through them. Heavy circles appeared under his eyes, and the lines from nose to chin sharpened perceptibly. More than ever he looked the eagle, stern and remote, capable of daring the very sun in high ambitious flight, or of sudden and death-dealing descent; but deep in his heart fear had entered.

VI

THE morning of the fifth day since Mrs. Marteen's departure found Gard in early consultation in the directors' room of his Wall Street office, facing a board of directors with but one opinion—he must go at once to Washington. Strangely enough, the plan met with stubborn resistance from his inner self. There was every reason for his going, but he did not want to go. His advisers and fellow directors looked in amazement as they saw him hesitate, and for once the Great Man was at a loss to explain. He knew, and they knew, that there was nothing that should detain him, nothing that could by any twist be construed into a valid excuse for refusal. He amazed himself and them by abruptly rising from his seat, bunching the muscles of his jaw in evident antagonism and hurling at them his ultimatum in a voice of defiance.

"Of course, gentlemen, it is evident that I must go, and I will. The situation requires it. But I ask you to name someone else—the vice-president, and you, Corrighan—in case something arises to prevent my leaving the city."

Langley, the lawyer, rose protesting.

"But, Mr. Gard, no one can take your place. It's the penalty, perhaps, of being what and who you are, but the honor of your responsibilities demands. There is more at stake than your own interests, or the interest of your friends. There's the public, your stockholders. You owe it to them and to yourself to shoulder this responsibility without any 'ifs', 'ands' or 'buts.'"

Gard turned as if to rend him. "I have told you I'll go, haven't I? But—and there is a but—gentlemen, you must select another delegate, or delegation, in case circumstances arise—"

Denning's voice interrupted from the end of the table. "Gard, what excuse is the only excuse for not returning one's partner's lead? Sudden death."

"Or when you *must* have the lead yourself," snapped Gard. "I cannot go into this matter with you, gentlemen. The contingency I speak of is very remote—if it is a contingency at all. But I must be frank. I cannot have you

take my enforced absence, if such should be necessary, as defalcation or a shirking of my duty—so I warn you.”

“The chance is remote,” Denning replied in quiet tones that palliated. “Let us decide, then, who, in case this vague possibility should shape itself, will act as delegates. I do not think we can improve on the president’s suggestion, but,” and he turned to Gard sternly, “I trust the contingency is *so* remote that we may consider it an impossibility for all our sakes, and your own.”

Gard did not answer. In silence he heard the motion carried, and silently and without his usual affability he turned and left the room. The others eyed each other with open discomfort.

“Well, gentlemen, the meeting is over,” said Denning gloomily. “We may as well adjourn.”

A very puzzled and uneasy group dispersed before the tall marble office building, while in his own private office Gard paced the floor, from time to time punching the open palm of his left hand with the clenched fist of his right, in fury at himself.

“Am I mad—am I mad?” he repeated mechanically. “Has the devil gotten into me?” His confidential clerk knocked, and seeing the Great Man’s face, paused in trepidation. “What is it? What is it?” snapped Gard.

“There’s Brencherly, sir, in the outer office. He wouldn’t give his message—said you’d want to see him in private; so I ventured—”

“Brencherly!” Gard’s heart missed a beat. He stopped short. He felt the mysterious dread from which he had suffered to be shaping itself from the darkness of uncertainty. “Show him in,” he ordered, and, turning to the window, gazed blindly out, centering his self-control. “Well?” he said without turning, as he heard the door open and close again.

“Mr. Gard,” came the quiet voice of the detective, “I’ve a piece of information, that, from what you told me the other day, I thought might interest you. I have found out that Mr. Mahr is mak-

ing every effort to find out the combination of Mrs. Marteen’s private safe.”

“What!”

“Yes. I learned it from one of the men in the Cole agency. Mr. Mahr didn’t come to us. I’m not betraying any trust, you see. It was Balling, one of the cleverest men they’ve got, but he drinks. I was out with him last night, and he let it out; he said it was the rummiest job they’d had in a long day, and that his chief wouldn’t have taken it, but he had a lot of commissions from Mahr, and I guess, besides, he gave some reason for wanting it that sort of squared him. Anyhow, that’s how it stands.”

“Have they got it?” Gard demanded.

“No, they hadn’t, but he said they expected to land it O. K. They know the make, and they’ve got access to the company’s books, and if she hasn’t changed the combination herself, they’ll land that all right. I tried to find out if they’d put anyone into the house or the apartment, but Balling sobered up a bit by that time and shut down on the talk. But it’s dollars to doughnuts he’s after something, and they’ve put a flat-tie around somewhere. Of course I don’t know how this frames up with what you told me about young Mahr, but I thought you might dope it out, perhaps.”

Gard sat down before his writing table, and wrote out a substantial cheque.

“There, Brencherly, that’s for you. Thank you. Now I put you on this officially. Find out for me, if you can, if they have put anyone in the house. Find out what they’re after. Anything at all that concerns this matter is of interest to me. Put a man to shadow Balling; have a watch put on anyone you think is acting for Mahr. I will take it upon myself to have the combination changed. I’ll send a message to Mrs. Marteen.”

Brencherly shook his head. “If you do that they’ll tumble to you, Mr. Gard. It’s an even chance Mr. Mahr would have any messages reported. He could, you know; he’s a pretty important stockholder in the transmission com-

panies. You better have a watchman or an alarm attachment on the safe, if you can."

Gard sat silent. He was reasoning out the motive of Mahr's movements. Did Mrs. Marteen still retain evidence against him which he was anxious to obtain during her absence? It seemed the obvious conclusion, and yet there was the possibility that Mahr contemplated vengeance, that in the safe he hoped to obtain evidence against Mrs. Marteen herself that would put her into his hands. On the whole, that seemed the most likely explanation, and one that offered such possibilities that he ground his teeth. He was roused from his reverie by Brencherly's hesitating voice.

"I think, Mr. Gard, I'd better go at once. I want to get a trailer after Balling, and if I'm a good guesser, we haven't any time to lose."

"You're right; go on. I was thinking what precautions had best be taken at Mrs. Marteen's home. I'll plan that—you do the rest. Good-bye."

Brencherly sidled to the door, bowed and disappeared.

The telephone bell on the table rang sharply. Gard took down the receiver absently, but the voice that trembled over the wire startled him like an electric shock. It was Dorothy's, but changed almost beyond recognition, a frightened, uncertain little treble.

"Is this Mr. Gard?" A sigh of relief greeted his affirmative. "Please, please, Mr. Gard, can I see you right away?"

"Where are you, Dorothy? Of course; I'm at your service always. What is it?" he asked, conscious that his own voice betrayed his agitation.

"I'm downstairs, in the building. I called you at your house and they told me you were here, so I came. You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind! Come up at once—or I'll send down for you."

"No—I'm coming now; thank you so much."

The receiver clicked, and Gard, anxious and puzzled, pressed the desk button for his man.

"Miss Marteen is coming. Show her in here."

A moment later Dorothy entered. Her face was pale and her eyes seemed doubled in size. She sat down in the chair he advanced for her, as if no longer able to stand erect, gave a little gasp and burst into tears.

"Dorothy, Dorothy!" begged Gard, distressed beyond measure. "Come, come, little girl, what is the matter? Tell me!"

She continued to sob, but reaching blindly for his hand, seemed to find encouragement and assurance in his firm clasp. At last she steadied herself, wiped her eyes and faced him.

"This morning," she began faintly, "a messenger brought this." From an inner pocket she took out a crumpled letter, and laid it on the table. "I didn't know what to do. Read it—read it!" she blazed. "It's too horrid—too cowardly—too wicked!"

He picked up the envelope. It was directed to Dorothy in typewritten characters. The paper was of the cheapest. He withdrew the enclosure, closely covered with typewriting, glanced over the four pages and turned to the end. It was unsigned. He began to read:

MISS DOROTHY MARTEEN:

That the sins of the parents should be visited upon the children is perhaps hard; but we feel it time for you to understand thoroughly your situation in order that you may determine what your future is to be. You have been reared all your life on stolen, or what is worse, extorted money. We hope you have not inherited the callous nature of your mother, and that this information will not leave you unashamed. Not a gown you have worn, nor a possession you have enjoyed, but has been yours through theft. That you may verify this statement, open the steel safe back of the second panel of the library wall to the left of the fireplace. The combination is 2-2-9-6-0. A button on the inner edge on the right releases a spring, opening a second compartment, where the materials of your future luxuries are stored. A look will be sufficient. I hardly think you will then care to occupy the position in the limelight to which you have been brought by such means. Obscurity is better, perhaps—even exile. Talk it over with your mother. We think she will agree with us.

Gard crushed the letter in his hand in a frenzy of fury. So this—this was Mahr's objective, this the cowardly, heartless vengeance his despicable mind had evolved! He would strike his enemy

through the heart of a child—he would humiliate the girl so that, with shame and horror, she would turn away from all that life held for her! He knew that if the bolt found lodgment in her heart she would consider herself a thing too low, too smirched, to face her world. Her marriage, that Mahr feared and hated, would never take place. Doubtless that evidence which Mrs. Marteen had once wielded was now in his possession and with all precautions taken he was fearless of any retaliation. The obscurity and exile he so subtly suggested would be sought as the only issue from intolerable conditions. No, no, a thousand times no! Mahr had leveled his stroke at a defenseless girl, but the weapon that should parry it would be wielded by a man's strong arm, backed by all the resources of brain and wealth.

As these thoughts raced through his mind, he had been standing erect and silent, his eyes staring at the paper that crackled in his clenched fist. Dorothy's voice sounded far away repeating something. It was not till a strange hysterical note crept into her voice that he realized what she was saying.

"Speak to me, please! What shall I do? What ought I to do? Tell me, tell me!"

"Do?" he exclaimed. "Do? Why, nothing, my dear. It's a damnable, treacherous snake-in-the-grass lie! Shake it out of your pretty head, and leave me to trace this thing and deal with the scoundrel who wrote it; and I'll promise you, my dear, that it will be such punishment as will satisfy *me*—and I am not easily satisfied."

Dorothy rose from the table tottering. "Mr. Gard," she whispered, "you won't think badly of me, will you, if I tell you something? And you will believe it wasn't because I believed one word of that detestable thing that I did what I did—you promise me that?"

He could feel his face grow ashen, but his voice was very gentle. "What was it, my dear? Of course I know you couldn't have noticed such a vile slander. What do you want to tell me?"

"I was frightened." Dorothy raised brimming eyes to his, pleading excuse

for what she felt must seem lack of faith. "I felt as if the house were filled with dangerous people. I wanted to see how much they really knew. I never heard mother speak of the safe in the library. I didn't want to speak to Tante Lydia. I—"

Gard's heart stood still. "You went to the library and located the safe—and then?"

"The combination they give is the right one—I opened it with that. Then I was so terrified that anyone—a wicked person like that—could know so much about things in our house—I slammed it shut and ran away to my room and locked myself in. It was then I called for you; and when they told me you were at a business meeting, I came. I could not stay in the house another minute. I felt as if I were suffocating. I felt as if some awful monster were chasing me—just like a nightmare."

The sigh that he drew was one of immeasurable relief. "Well, you are awake now, my dear, and the goblin sha'n't chase you any more. But I'm greatly troubled about what you tell me, about your having opened the safe. I want you to come with me now. Is your aunt home? Yes? Well, I'll telephone my sister to call for her and take her out somewhere. Then we'll return, and I will take all the responsibility of what I think it's best to do. One thing is quite evident: your mother's valuables are not safe, if they haven't already been tampered with and stolen. You see—well, I'll explain as we go. I'll get rid of Tante Lydia first."

A few telephone calls arranged matters, and a message called his motor from its neighboring waiting place. "You see," he continued, as the machine throbbed its way northward, "there are several possibilities. One is, that this anonymous person is mad. In that case, we can't take too many precautions. The ingenuity of the insane is proverbial. Then, this may be a vicious vengeance; someone who hates your splendid mother, and would hurt her through you. You can see that if you had believed this detestable story it would have broken her heart. Now

such a person, hoping that you would investigate, would have been quite capable of stocking your mother's secret compartment with stuff that at the first glance would have seemed to substantiate the story. You see, they knew all about the combination and the inner compartment, and they must have had access. They probably took you for a silly little fool, full of curiosity, and counted on the shock of falling into their trap being so great that you would be in no condition to reason matters out; that you and your mother would be hopelessly estranged, or at least that you would so hurt and distress her that they could gloat over her unhappiness. You know you are the one thing she loves in all the world, Dorothy."

He had talked looking straight ahead of him, striving to give his words judicial weight. Now he glanced down at Dorothy's face. It was calm, and a little color was returning to her cheeks. She pressed his hand fervently.

"But it's so wicked!" she repeated. "It frightens me to think of such viciousness so near to us, and we don't know and can't guess who it is."

"We'll find a clue. I'll have detectives to watch the house, and to trace the messenger who brought that letter, if possible. Say nothing to anyone, not even to Tante Lydia. Perhaps it would be best not to worry your mother at all about it. She's not well, you see. In the meantime, I'm going to take everything out of the safe, and transfer it to my own in the library. I'll make a list. Then we'll change the combination."

"Oh, I wish I'd come to you the very first minute," sighed Dorothy. "You're such a tower of strength, and you make everything so easy and simple. I'm ashamed of my fright, and my crying like a baby and all. You are so good to me—I—I just love you."

For a second she rested her head on his shoulder with an abandon of childlike confidence, and his heart thrilled. His inner consciousness, however, warned him that a deeper motive than his desire to save Dorothy actuated him—he must shield the mother from the danger that had threatened the one vulnerable point

in her armor of indifference, the love and respect of her child.

At the apartment, inquiry for Aunt Lydia elicited the information that the lady had that moment left in company with Miss Gard, and the two conspirators proceeded alone to the library.

Gard closed the door and drew the heavy leather curtain, and turned questioning to Dorothy. With slow, reluctant movements she approached the wall, released the panel and exposed the front of the safe. With inexperienced fingers, she set the combination and pulled back the door.

"Where is the spring?" demanded Gard. He could not bear to have her touch what might lay behind the second partition. "Here, dear, take out these jewel cases and see if they are all right." He swept the velvet and morocco boxes into her hands, and felt better as he heard their clattering fall upon the table. The secret was about to be revealed. He paused, listening for an instant to the beating of his own heart. He pressed the spring, and with swimming eyes looked at what the shelves revealed. "Dorothy," he called, and his voice was brittle as thin glass, "take a pencil and make a list as I dictate: One package of government bonds; a sheaf of bills, marked \$2,000; two small boxes, wrapped and sealed; three large envelopes, sealed; two vouchers pinned together. Have you got that? I'll take possession for the present. Make a copy of that list for me." He snapped fast the inner door, and turned as he thrust the last of the packets into an inner pocket. "Now, thank you, my dear; and how about the valuables?"

"There's nothing missing," said Dorothy, handing him a written slip, "except things I know mother took with her. So, robbery wasn't the motive. I think you must be right. It's some crank. But, oh, if you only knew how afraid I am to stay here! I'm afraid of my own shadow; I'm afraid of the clock chimes; when the telephone rings I'm in a panic. Don't you think I could go away somewhere, with Tante Lydia—just go away?"

Gard gasped at the suggestion. He

could be sure that she would be beyond the reach of Mahr and his poisonous vengeance until he had time to crush him once and for all.

"Yes," he nodded, "you should go away. This crank may be dangerous. We know he is cunning. You should run off with your chaperon—say nothing about where to anyone, not to a soul, mind; not to the servants here, not even to Teddy Mahr. Just run down incognito to Atlantic City or Lakewood, or better still, to some little place where you are not known. Write your polite little notes, and say your first season has been too strenuous, and run away. When can you go? Tonight? Tomorrow morning?"

"Yes, I could be ready tonight; but what shall we say to Tante Lydia?"

"Half the truth," he answered. "I'll take the responsibility. I'll tell her I've been informed by my private people that an anonymous person has been threatening you; that they are trying to locate him; and that as he is known to be dangerous, I've advised your leaving at once and quietly. I'll tell her a few of my experiences in that line that will make her believe that 'discretion is the better part of valor.'" He laughed bitterly. "The kind attentions I've had in the way of infernal machines and threats by telephone and letter. And I see only a few, you know. What my secretaries stop and the police get on to besides would exhaust one. It's the penalty of the limelight, my dear. But don't take this too seriously. I'll have everything in hand in a day or two. Now I'm off to put your mother's valuables in a place of safety. Let's stow those jewel cases in a handbag. Can you lend me one?" She left the room and returned presently with a traveling case, into which Gard tossed the elaborate boxes without ceremony. "I've been thinking," he said presently, "that my sister's place in Westchester is open. She goes down often for week ends. There's a train at eight that will get you in by nine-thirty, and I can telephone instructions to meet you and have everything ready. If you motored down, you see, the chauffeur would

know and you must be quite incognito. It'll be dead quiet, my dear, but you need a rest, and we can keep in touch with one another so easily."

Dorothy leaned forward and gazed at him with burning eyes. "You are so good," she murmured. "Of course I'll go. I know mother would want me to—don't you think so?"

He smiled grimly. "I'm certain she would. Now here are your directions; I'll attend to all the rest. All you have to do is pack. I'll send for you." He wrote for a moment, handed Dorothy the slip and began a note of explanation for Mrs. Ellison. "There," he said, as he handed over the missive for Dorothy's approval, "that covers the case. And now, my dear, the rest is my affair, and whoever he is—may God have mercy on his soul!"

VII

EARLY on the morning following Dorothy's hurried departure, Marcus Gard, having dismissed his valet, was finishing his dressing in the presence of Brencherly.

"I tried to get you last night," he rasped; "anyhow, you're here. What have you to report to me?"

Brencherly shook his head. "As far as I can learn, sir, there's nobody slipped in the Marteen place, sir. All the information about the safe they have they got from the manufacturers and the people who installed it—only a short time ago."

Gard frowned. "Well, I happen to know they got what they were after in the way of information. But I took the liberty of being custodian of the contents of that strong box—with Miss Marteen's permission, of course—so there is nothing more to be done in that direction. Now, have you had a man trailing Mahr? What I want is an interview with him under informal and quiet surroundings, with a view to clearing the matter up, you understand. But I'd rather not ask him for a meeting. All I know about his mode of life is: Metropolitan Club after five, usually; the Opera Monday nights. Neither of

these habits will assist me in the least. I want by tomorrow a pretty good list of his engagements and a general map of his day—or perhaps you know enough now to oblige me with that information.”

Brencherly cast an inquisitive look at Gard. He had never accepted Gard's explanation of his interest in Mahr's affairs. He hesitated a moment wondering how to make his information most lucrative.

“Well,” he began slowly, “I put our men on the other end of the case—Balling, the Essex Safe Company and all that, and I went after Mahr myself. I think I can give you a fair idea of his daily life. He's at the office early—before nine, usually—and by twelve he's off, unless something unusual happens. He lunches with a club of men, as I guess you know. He goes for an hour to Tim McCurdy's, the ex-pugilist, for training. Then he's home for an hour with his secretary, going over private business and correspondence. Then he goes to the club for bridge, and in the evening he's usually out somewhere—any place that's A1 with the crowd. His son he has tied as tight to the office as any tenpenny clerk; doesn't get off till after five, and then he makes a beeline for the Marteens or goes wherever he'll find the girl. I think—but, perhaps you know best.” He paused, with one of his characteristic shuffles.

Gard noted the sign and interpreted it correctly.

“If you've got a good idea, it's worth your while,” he said shortly.

Brencherly blushed as guilelessly as a girl. “Oh, it's nothing, only I think—perhaps if you want to see him alone, you might pretend some business and go to his house about the time he's there every afternoon.”

“And discuss our affairs before a secretary?” sneered Gard. “You can bet Mahr'd have him in the office—I know his way.”

“Well, his den is pretty near sound-proof, like yours, sir. And besides, I could arrange with Mr. Long, the secretary, to have a headache, or a bad fall, or any little thing, the day you might mention—he's a personal friend of mine.”

“Well, just now I don't much care how you manage it. What I want is that interview. Is your friend, Mr. Long, a confidential secretary?”

“I don't think,” said Brencherly demurely, “that Mr. Mahr is very confidential even to himself.”

“Could you reach him—Mr. Long, I mean—at any time?” asked Gard—he was planning rapidly.

The detective nodded toward the telephone.

“Well,” growled his employer, “could your man suggest to Mahr that he had had wind of something in Cosmopolitan Telephone? I'll see that there's a move to corroborate it by noon today, if Long gets in his tip early. And suggest, too, that I'm sore because he bought the Heim Vandyke; but that if he asked me to come and see it, I'd go, and he might have a chance to pump me. I happen to know that Mahr is in the telephone pool up to the eyes, and he'd do anything to get into quick communication with me. He is probably going to the club today, and I'll not be there—see?”

Brencherly shrugged his shoulders. “Of course, if things turn out—um—fishy, Long loses his job. But he's a good man to have well placed. I guess we could land him a berth.”

Gard sickened. He could read the detective's secret satisfaction in the association of that “we” in a shady transaction. Naturally, to have a man on whom they “had something” in a place of trust might be a great asset.

“Long will be taken care of,” he snapped, replacing his scarfpin for the twentieth time, and making an unspoken promise to himself to send the secretary so far away from the scene of Brencherly's activities that he would at least have a chance to begin life anew without fear of the past.

“May I?” queried Brencherly, with a jerk of his head toward the telephone.

“Rather you didn't—from here. Go out, get your man and tell me when he will tip Mahr. That means my orders in the Street. Tell him there is news of federal action. I drop out enough stock to sink the quotations a few points—it's

the truth, too, hang it! But it won't get very far."

A crafty smile curled the detective's lips as he rose to go. "Very good, sir. We'll pull it off all right. I suppose the office will find you?"

"Yes," said Gard. "And I see you intend to take a flier on your inside information. Well, all I say is, don't hang on too long. Get busy now; there's no time to waste."

He rang for his valet to show the man out, descended to the dining room, dispatched his simple breakfast and turned his face and thoughts officeward. With that move came the thought of Washington. He cast it from him angrily, yet when the swirl of business affairs closed around him he experienced a certain pleasure and relief in stemming its tides and battling with its current. True, the current was swift and boded the whirlpool, but the rage that was in him seemed to give him added strength, added foresight. At least in this struggle he was gaining, mastering the flood and directing it to his will. Would his mastery be proven in this other and more personal affair? He set his teeth and redoubled his efforts, intent on proving his own power to himself. Even as Napoleon believed in his star, Gard trusted in his luck; and it was with a smothered laugh of sardonic satisfaction that news of the first move in his campaign came over the wire.

"My man has tipped his hand," came Brencherly's voice. "The other one is more than interested—excited. Make your cast and you get a bite on your picture bait."

Gard telephoned his orders to several brokers to sell and sell quickly and make no secret of it, then returned to work with a laugh upon his lips.

Contrary to his habit he remained in his office during the luncheon hour, having a tray sent in. He was to remain invisible. Mahr would doubtless make every effort to find him by what might appear as accident. Later a message, asking him to join a bridge game at the Metropolitan Club, caused him to chuckle. His would-be host was a friend of Mahr's. He answered curtly

that he was sick of wasting his time at cards, and had decided to drop it for a while, hanging up the receiver so abruptly that the conversation ceased in the midst of a word. An hour later Mahr addressed him over the wire.

"Ah, Gard, is that you? I called you up to tell you the Heim Vandyke has just been sent up to me. I hear you were interested in it yourself, though you saw only the photograph. Don't you want to stop in on your way uptown and see it? It's a gem. You'll be sorry you didn't bid on it. But, joking aside, you're the connoisseur whose opinion I want. I don't give a continental about the dealers; they'll fill you up with anything." Gard growled a brief acceptance. "I'll be glad to see you. Good-bye."

Abruptly Gard terminated his interviews and conferences, adjourning all business till the following day. Mentioning an hour when, if necessary, he might be found in his home, he dismissed his officials, slipped into his overcoat, secured his hat, turned at the door of his private office, muttering something about his stick, and, quickly crossing the room, opened a drawer of his writing table and drew forth a small, snub-nosed revolver. He hesitated a moment, tossed it back, and squaring his shoulders strode from the room.

Half an hour later he entered the spacious lobby of Victor Mahr's ostentatious marble dwelling.

"Mr. Mahr is expecting you, sir," said the solemn servant, who conducted him to a vast anteroom, hung with trophies of armor, and bowed him into a second room, book-lined and business-like, evidently the secretary's private office, deserted now and in some confusion, as if the occupant had left in haste. The servant crossed to a door opposite, and having discreetly knocked and announced the distinguished visitor, bowed and retired. The lackey would have taken Gard's overcoat and hat, but he retained his hold upon them, as if determined that his stay should be short.

Mahr rose to greet him, his hand extended. Gard's impedimenta seemed to preclude the handshake, and the host

hastened to insist upon his guest being relieved.

Gard shook his head "I have only a moment to inspect your picture, Mahr," he said coldly.

"Oh, no, don't say that. Have a highball; you will find everything on the table. What can I give you? This Scotch is excellent."

"No," said Gard sternly. "Excuse me; I am here for one purpose."

Mahr was chagrined, but switched on the electric lights above the canvas occupying the place of honor on the crowded wall. The portrait stood revealed, a jewel of color, rich as a ruby, mysterious as an autumn night, vivid in its humanity, divine in its art, palpitating with life, yet remote as death itself. The marvelous canvas glowed before them—a thing to quell anger, to stifle love, to still hate itself in an impulse of admiration.

Suddenly Marcus Gard began to laugh, as he had laughed that day long ago, at his own discomfiture.

"What is it?" stuttered Mahr, amazed. "Don't you think it genuine?" There was panic in his voice.

Gard laughed again, then broke off as suddenly as he had begun; and passion thrilled in his voice as he turned fierce eyes upon his enemy.

"I am laughing at the singular role this painting has played in my life. We have met before—the Heim Vandyke and I. If Fate chooses to turn painter, we must grind his colors, I suppose. But what I intend to grind first, is you, Victor Mahr! You—you cowardly hound! No—stand where you are; don't go near that bell. It's hard enough for me to keep my hands off you as it is!"

The attack had been so unexpected that Mahr was honestly at a loss to account for it. He looked anxiously toward the door, remembered the absence of his secretary and gasped in fear. He was at the mercy of the madman. With an effort he mastered his terror.

"Don't be angry," he stammered. "Don't be annoyed with me; it's all a mistake, you know. Are you—are you feeling quite well? Do let me give you

something—a—a glass of champagne, perhaps. I'll call a servant."

Gard's smile was so cruel that Mahr's worst fears were confirmed. But the torrent of accusation that burst from Gard's lips bore him down with the consciousness of the other's knowledge.

"You scoundrel!" roared the enraged man. "You squirming, poisonous snake! You would strike at a woman through her daughter, would you! You would send anonymous letters to a child about her mother! You would hire sneaks for your sneaking vileness!—coward, brute that you are! Well, I know it all—all, I say. And as true as I live, if ever you make one move in that direction again, I shall find it out, and I will kill you! But first I'll go to your boy, Victor Mahr, and I shall tell him: 'Your father is a criminal—a bigamist. Your mother never was his wife. Sneak and beast from first to last, he found it easier to desert and deceive. You are the nameless child of an outcast father, the whelp of a cur.' I'll say in your own words, Victor Mahr: 'Obscurity is best, perhaps, even exile.' Do you remember those words? Well, never forget them again as long as you live, or, by God, you'll have no time on earth to make your peace!"

Mahr's face was gray; his hands trembled. He looked at that moment as if the death the other threatened was already come upon him. There was a moment of silence, intense, charged with the electricity of emotions—a silence more sinister than the noise of battles. Twice Mahr attempted to speak, but no sound came from his contracted throat. Slowly he pulled himself together. A look more awful, more inhuman, flashed over his convulsed features. Words came at last, high, cackling and cracked, like the voice of senility.

"It's you—it's *you!*" he quavered. "So she told you everything, did she? So you and she—"

The sentence ended in a hoarse gasp, as Mahr launched himself at Gard with the spring of an animal goaded beyond endurance.

Gard was the larger man, and his wrath had been long demanding expres-

sion. They closed with a jar that rocked the electric lamp on the desk. There was a second of straining and uncertainty. Then with a jerk Gard lifted his adversary clear off his feet, and shook him, shook him with the fury of a bulldog, and as relentlessly. Then, as if the temptation to murder was more than he could longer resist, he flung him from him.

Mahr fell at full length upon the heavy rug, limp and inert, yet conscious.

Gard stooped, picked up his hat and gloves from where they had fallen and turned upon his heel.

At that moment the outside door of the secretary's office opened and closed, and footsteps sounded in the room beyond.

"Get up," said Gard quietly, "unless you care to have them see you there."

The sound had acted like magic upon the prostrate man. He did not need the admonition. He had already dragged his shaking body to an upright position, ere he slowly sank down into the embrace of one of the huge armchairs.

A quick knock was followed by the appearance of Teddy Mahr. The room was in darkness save for the light on the table and the clustered radiance concentrated upon the glowing portrait, that had smiled down remote and serene upon the scene just enacted, as it had doubtless gazed upon many another as strange.

"Father!" exclaimed the boy, and as he came farther into the room his face showed pale and anxious.

Gard did not give him time for a reply. "Good evening," he said. "I have been admiring the Vandyke. A wonderful canvas, and one thing that your father may well be proud of."

At the sound of the voice the young man turned and advanced with an exclamation of welcome. "Mr. Gard, the very one I most wanted to see. Tell me—what is the matter? Where has Dorothy gone? I've been to the house, and either they don't know or they won't tell me. She didn't let me know. I can't understand it. For heaven's sake, tell me! Nothing is wrong, is there?"

"Why, of course, you should know, Teddy." For the first time he used the

familiar term. "I quite forgot about you young people. You see, Dorothy received threatening letters from some crank, and as we weren't sure what might occur I sent her off. Mahr, shall I tell your son?"

He turned to where the limp figure showed huddled in the depths of red upholstery. There was a question and a threat in the measured words.

"Of course, tell him Miss Marteen's address," and in that answer there was a prayer.

"Then here." Gard wrote a few words on his card and gave it into the boy's eager hand. "Run up and see her. She's with her aunt. I can bring her home any time now, however. We've located the trouble and got the man under restraint. Good-night."

VIII

As Marcus Gard stood upon the steps of Mahr's residence, and heard the soft closing of its door behind him, he shut his eyes, drew himself erect and breathed deep of the keen, cold air. A rush of youth expanded every vein and artery. He experienced the physical and mental exultation of the strong man who has met and conquered his enemy. The mere personal expression of his anger had relieved him. He felt strong, alert, almost happy. He descended to the street and turned his steps homeward. At last something was accomplished. The serpent's fangs were drawn. He experienced a cynical amusement in the thought that the path of true love had been smoothed by such equivocal means. Neither of the children would ever know of the shadows that had gathered so closely around them.

But, Mrs. Marteen—what of her? Again the longing came upon him—to know her awake to herself and to her own soul; to know the predatory instinct forever quieted, that upsurging of some remote inconscience of the race's history of rapine in the open, and acquisition by stealth forever conquered; to know her spirit triumphant. The momentary joy of successful battle

passed, leaving him deeply troubled. All his fears and helplessness returned. The sense of impending disaster, that had withdrawn for the moment, returned once more.

He entered his own home absently, listened, abstracted, to the various items Saunders thought important enough to mention, dismissed him, and turned wearily to a pile of personal mail. His eye caught a familiar handwriting on a thick envelope.

From Mrs. Marteen, evidently—but postmarked St. Augustine. He broke the seal, wondering how her letter came to bear that mark. What change had been made in her plans? He hesitated, panic-stricken, like a woman before an unexpected telegram. He withdrew the enclosure, noting at a glance a variety of papers—the appearance of a diary.

"Dear, dear friend," it began, "I must write—I must, and to you, because you know—you know, and yet you have made me your friend—to you, because you love my little girl. They are killing me, killing me through her. I'm coming home, as fast as I can; I don't yet know how, for I'm heading the other way, and I can't stop the steamer, but I'm coming. I received a message, the second day out. It had been given to the purser for delivery and marked with the date—that's nothing unusual; I've had steamer letters delivered, one each day, during a whole crossing. I never gave it a thought when he handed it to me, I never divined. It seems to me now that I should have sensed it. I read it, and—but how to tell you? I have it here; I'll send it to you."

A sheet of notepaper was pinned to the letter. Sick at heart, Gard unfastened it. Mahr's name appeared at the bottom. Gard read: "Dear lady, you forgot to give your daughter the combination of the jewel safe and its inner compartment before you sailed. I attended to that for you promptly, and have no doubt that she will at once inventory the contents. We are always glad to return favors conferred upon us."

Gard's heart stood still. A sweeping regret invaded him that he had not

slain the man when his hands were upon him. He threw the note aside and turned again to Mrs. Marteen's letter.

"You see," he read, "there is nothing for me to do. A wireless to Dorothy? She has doubtless had the information since the hour of my departure. What can I do? I have thought of you; but how make you, who know nothing of Victor Mahr, understand anything in a message that would not reveal all to everyone who must aid in its transmission? That at least mustn't happen. I am praying every minute that she will go to you—you, who know and have tolerated me. I can't bear for her to know—I can't—it's killing me! My heart contracts and stops when I think of it."

Further down the page, in another ink, evidently written later, was a single note:

"I've left a message with the wireless operator, a sort of desperate hope that it may be of some use—to Dorothy, telling her to consult you on all matters of importance. I've written one to you, telling you to find her. The man says he'll send them out as soon as he gets into touch with anyone."

A still later entry:

"Two P. M.—I'm in my cabin all the time. I think that I shall go mad. That sounds conventional, doesn't it—reminiscent of melodrama! I assure you it's worse than real. I feel as if for years and years I've been asleep, and now I've wakened up into a nightmare. I *can* write to you; that's the one thing that gives me relief. Your kindness seems a shield behind which I can crawl. I can't sleep; I can only—not think—no, it isn't thinking I do—it's realizing—and everything is terrible. The sunlight makes ripples on my cabin ceiling; they weave and part and wrinkle. I try to fix my attention on them, and hypnotize myself into lethargy. Sometimes I almost succeed, and then I begin realizing again. And in the night I stare at the electric light till my eyes ache, and try to numb my thoughts. Must my little girl know what I am? Can't that be averted? I know it can't—I know, and yet I pray and pray—I—I—*pray!*"

Another sheet, evidently torn from a pad:

"The wireless is out of order; they couldn't send my messages. You don't know the despair that has taken hold of me. My mind feels white—that's the only way I can describe it—cold and white—frozen, a blank. My body is that way, too. I hold my hands to the light, and it doesn't seem as if there was even the faintest red. They are the hands of a dead person—I wish they were! But I must know—must know. We are due in Havana tomorrow. I shall take the first boat out—to anywhere, where I can get a train, that's the quickest. Oh, you, who have so often told me I must stop and think and realize things! Did you know what it *was* you wanted me to do? Have you any idea what torture *is*? You couldn't! I don't believe even Mahr would have done this to me—if he had known; nobody could—nobody could. Now, all sorts of things are assailing me; not only the horror that Dorothy should *know*, but the horror of having *done* such things. I can't feel that it was I; it must have been somebody else. Why, I couldn't have; it's impossible; and yet I did, I did, I did! Sometimes I laugh, and then I am frightened at myself—I did it just then; it was at the thought that here am I, *writing letters*—I, who have always thought letters that incriminate were the weakness of fools, the blind sport of intelligence—I, who have profited by letters—written in anger, in love, in the passion of money getting—everything—I'm writing—writing from my bursting heart. Ah, you wanted me to realize; I'm fulfilling your wish. Oh, good, kind soul that you are, forgive me! I'm clinging to the thought of you to save me; I'm trusting in you blindly. It's five days since I left."

The sheet that followed was on beflagged yachting paper:

"What luck! I happened on the Detmores the moment I landed. They were just sailing. I transferred to them. I'm on board and homeward bound. We reach St. Augustine tomorrow night; then I'm coming through as fast as I can. I've thought it all over now. Since the

wireless wasn't sent, I shall send no cable or telegram. I shall find out what the situation is, and perhaps it will be better for me just to disappear. It may be best that Dorothy shall never see me again. I shall go straight home. I'm posting this in St. Augustine; it will probably go on the same train with me. When you receive this and have read it, come to me. I shall need you, I know—but perhaps you won't care to; perhaps you won't want to be mixed up in an affair that may already be the talk of the town. It's one thing to know a criminal who goes unquestioned and another to befriend one revealed and convicted. Don't come, then. I am at the very end of my endurance now. What sort of a wreck will walk into that disgraced home of mine? And still I pray and pray—"

Gard stood up. A sudden dizziness seized him. Go to her! Of course he must, at once, at once; there was not a moment to be lost. He calculated the length of time the letter had taken to reach him since its delivery in the city—hours at least. And she had returned home to find—what? He almost cried out in his anguish—to find Dorothy gone, no one at the house knew where. What must she think?

He snatched up the telephone and called her number, his voice shaking in spite of his effort to control it.

The butler answered. Yes; madam had returned suddenly; had gone to the library for something; had asked for Miss Dorothy, and when she heard she was away, had made no comment, and left shortly afterwards. Yes, she appeared ill, very ill.

"I'm coming over, Thornton," Gard cut in. "I'll be there in a few minutes."

He rang, ordered the servant to stop the first taxi, seized his coat and hat, left a peremptory order to his physician not to be beyond call, tumbled into his outer garments and made for the street. The taxi sputtered at the curb, but just as he dashed down the steps a limousine drew up, and Denning sprang from its opened door. His hand fell heavily upon Gard's shoulder as he stooped to enter the cab. Gard turned, his over-

wrought nerves stinging with the shock of the other's restraining touch.

Denning's hand fell, for the face of his friend was distorted beyond recognition. The words his lips had framed to speak died upon his tongue, as with a furious heave Gard shook him off, entered the cab and slammed the door. Denning stood for a moment surprised into inaction, then, with an order to follow, he leaped into his own car and started in pursuit.

When Gard reached the familiar entrance, his anxiety had grown, like physical pain, almost to the point where human endurance ceases and becomes brute suffering. He felt cornered and helpless. At the door of Mrs. Marteen's apartment a sort of unreasoning rage filled him. To ring the bell seemed a futility; he wanted to break in the painted glass and batter down the door. The calm expression of the butler who answered his summons was like a personal insult. Were they all mad that they did not realize?

"Where is Mrs. Marteen?" he demanded hoarsely.

The servant shook his head. "She left two hours ago, at least," he answered, with a glance toward the hall clock.

"What did she say—what message did she leave?" Gard pushed by him impatiently, making for the stairs leading to the upper floor and the library.

The butler stared. "Why, nothing, sir. She asked for Miss Dorothy, and when none of us could tell her where she went, or why—which we all thought queer enough, sir—she didn't seem surprised; so I suppose she knows, sir. Madam just went upstairs to the library first, and then to Miss Dorothy's room—the maid saw her, sir—and then she came down and went out. She had on a heavy veil, but she looked scarce fit to stand for all that, and she went—never said a word about her baggage or anything—just went out to the cab that was waiting. I hope there's nothing wrong, sir?"

Gard listened, his heart tightening with apprehension. "Call White Plains, 56," he ordered sharply. "Tell Miss

Dorothy to come at once and then send for me, quick, now!" he commanded; and as the wondering flunky turned toward the telephone, he sprang up the stairs to the second floor, threw open the library door and entered. The electric lights were blazing in the heat and silence of the closed room. The odor of violets hung reminiscent in the stale air. The panel by the mantelpiece was thrust back, and the door of the safe, so uselessly concealed, hung open, revealing the empty shelves within and the deep shadow of the inner compartment. He saw it all in a flash of understanding: the frantic woman's rush to the place of concealment, the ravaged hiding place. What could she argue, but that all that her enemy had planned had befallen? Her child knew all, and had gone—fled from her and the horror of her life, leaving no sign of forgiveness or pity.

Sick, almost faint, Gard turned away. One door in the corridor stood open, left so, he divined, by the hurried passing of the mother from the empty nest, Dorothy's room, all pink and white and girlish in its simplicity. One fragrant pillow, with its dainty embroidered cover, was dented, as if still warm from the burning cheek that had pressed it in an agony of loss. Nothing about the chamber was displaced; only an empty photograph frame lying upon the dressing table told of the trembling, pale hands that had bereft it of its jewel. She had taken her little girl's picture with the heartbroken conviction that never again would she see its original, or that those girlish eyes would look upon her again save in fear and loathing. The empty leather case dropped from his hands to the silver-crowded, lace-covered table; he was startled to see in the mirror, hung with its frivolous load of cotillion favors and dance cards, his own face convulsed with grief, and turned, appalled, from his own image. His resourceful brain refused its functions. He could not guess her movements after that silent, definitive leave taking. He could but picture her tall, erect figure, outwardly composed and nonchalant, as she must have stood, facing the outer world, looking out to what—to what? A

mad hope rose in his breast. Would she turn to him? Would her instinctive steps lead her to seek his protection?

Yes. He must be where she could find him; he must be within reach. It could not be that she would pass thus silently into some unknown life—or—He would not concede the other possibility.

Turning blindly from the room, he descended to the lower floor, where the butler, with difficulty suppressing his curiosity, informed him that Miss Dorothy had answered that she would return to town at once.

Gard hesitated, then turned sharply upon the servant. "Your mistress has been ill, as you know. We have reason to believe that she is not quite herself. If you learn anything of her, notify me at once. No matter what orders she may give, you understand, or no matter how slight the clue—send for me."

Once again in the street, he paused, uncertain. His eye fell upon Denning's limousine drawn up behind his waiting cab. Fury at this espionage sent him toward it. Thrusting his face in at the open window, he glared at his pursuer.

"What are you here for?" he snarled.

Denning looked at him coldly. "To see that you keep faith, that's all. Your personal concerns must wait. Have you forgotten that you are to take the midnight train to Washington? I'm here to see that you do it."

Gard wrenched open the door of the car. "You are, are you? Let the whole damned thing go!" he cried. "Send your proxies. This is a matter of life and death!"

"I know it," said Denning; "it is—to a lot of people who trust you; and you are going to do your duty if I have to kidnap you to do it. You have two hours before your train leaves. My private car is waiting for you. Make what plans you like till then; but I'll not leave you; neither will Langley—he's following you, too. Come, buck up. Are you mad that you desert in the face of shipwreck?"

Gard turned suddenly, ordered his taxi to follow and got in beside Denning. His mood and voice were changed.

"I've got to think. Don't speak to me. Get me home as soon as you can."

He leaned back, closed his eyes and concentrated all his energies. In the first place, Denning was right—he must not desert, even with his own disaster close upon him. He owed his public his life, if necessary. As a king must go to the defense of his people in spite of every private grief or necessity, so he must go now. The very form of his decision surprised him. He realized that his yearning for another soul's awakening had awakened his own soul. He had willed her a conscience and developed one himself. But, his decision reached with that sudden precision characteristic of him, his anxious fears demanded that every possible precaution be taken, every effort made that could tend to save or relieve the desperate situation he must leave behind him. First of all his physician—to him he must speak the truth, and to him alone. Brencherly should be his active tool. Mahr must be impressed.

Springing from the motor at his own door, he snapped an order to his butler, and sent him with the cab to bring the doctor instantly. Once in the library, he telephoned for the detective. He then called up Victor Mahr, requested that however late he might call, his visitor be admitted at once, on a matter of the first importance and received the assurance that his wishes would be complied with; he asked Denning, who had followed him, to wait in another room, thrust back the papers on his table and settled himself to write.

"No one knows anything," he scrawled, "neither Dorothy nor anyone else." With succinct directness he covered the whole story—explained, elucidated. Through every word the golden thread of his deep devotion glowed steadily. Would the letter ever reach her? Would her eyes ever see the reassuring lines? He refused to believe his efforts useless. She must come. He sealed and directed the letter, as Brencherly was admitted. Gard turned and eyed the young man sharply, wondering how much, how little he dared tell him.

"Brencherly," he said slowly, "I'm

giving you the biggest commission of your life. You've got to take my place here, for I'm going to the front. I've got to rely on you, and if you fail me, well, you know me—that's enough. Now, I want discretion first, last and all the time. Then I want foresight, tact, genius—everything in you that can think and plan. Here are the facts: Mrs. Marteen has come back—suddenly. She's been ill. Her mind, from all I can learn, is affected. She has delusions; she may have suicidal mania. She has disappeared, and she must be found—as secretly as possible. Her delusions and illness must not become a newspaper headline. I needn't tell you it would make 'a story.' There's one chance in fifty that she may come here, or telephone for me. You are not to leave this room. Answer that telephone—you know her voice, don't you? You are to tell her that I have her letter and she has nothing to worry about; that I have had charge of all her affairs in her absence; that her daughter knows of her return and wants her at once. Tell her that I have left a letter for her—this one. When Miss Marteen calls up, tell her to go to her home; that her mother has come back, but has left again, and is ill; that I'm doing all in my power to find her. Tell her to call me at once on the long distance telephone to Washington, at the New Willard. Wherever I have to be I'll arrange that I can be called at once. Do you understand?

"Dr. Balys will be here in a few moments. He will have the hospitals canvassed. If you locate her, Brencherly, send the doctor to her at once. Get her to her own apartment, and don't let her talk. I want you to pick a man to watch the morgue; to look up every case of reported suicide that by any chance might be Mrs. Marteen—here or in other cities." Gard felt the blood leave his heart as he said the words, though there was no quaver in his voice. "If they should find her, don't let her identity be known if there is any chance of concealing it, not until you reach me. Don't let Miss Marteen know. Put another man on the hotel arrivals. See if you can trace her baggage from the station. She

left St. Augustine— Here—" He jotted down times and dates on a slip. "Work on that. Keep the police off. I'll have Balys stay here, unless he locates her in any of the hospitals. My secretary is yours; and there are half a dozen telephones in the house; you can keep 'em all going. But, mind, there must be no leak. Watch her apartment, too. I've a notion her maid may show up there. Of course that letter on the table there might interest you, but I think I had better trust you, since I make you my deputy. This is no small matter, Brencherly. Honesty is the best policy—and there *are* rewards and punishments."

The strain of grief and anxiety had set its mark on Gard's face. His deadly earnestness and evident effort at self-control sent a thrill of pitying admiration through the detective's hardened indifference. A rush of loyalty filled his heart; he wanted to help, without thought of reward or punishment. He felt hot shame that his calling had deserved the suspicion his employer cast upon it.

"I'll do my honest best," he said with such clear-eyed sincerity that Gard smiled wanly and held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said simply.

The interview with the doctor lasted another half-hour. Time seemed to fly. Another hour and he must leave to others the quest that his soul demanded. Unquestioning and determined, Denning took him once more in the limousine. They were silent during the drive to Victor Mahr's address. Gard descended before the house, leaving Denning in the car.

"Don't worry," he said as he closed the door of the automobile. "I'll not be long; I give you my word."

Denning smiled. "That's all that's wanted in Washington, old man. You've got a quarter of an hour to spare."

Denning switched on the electric light and, taking a bundle of papers from his inside pocket, began to pencil swift annotation.

Gard ran lightly up the steps. It was quite on the cards that Mrs. Marteen in her anguish and despair might make an effort to see and upbraid the man whose

hatred and vengeance had wrecked her life. Mahr must be warned of all that had taken place, and schooled to meet the situation—to confess at once that his plans had been thwarted, that his tongue was forever bound to silence and that his intended victim was free. He, Marcus Gard, must dictate every word that might be said, foresee every possible form in which a meeting might come, and dictate the terms of Mahr's surrender. Words and sentences formed and shifted in his mind as he waited impatiently for his summons to be answered. The butler bowed, murmuring that Mr. Mahr was expecting Mr. Gard, and preceded him across the anteroom to the well remembered door of the inner sanctum, which he threw open before the guest, and retired silently.

Closing the door securely behind him, Gard turned toward the sole occupant of the room. Mahr did not heed his coming nor rise to greet him. The ticking of the carved Louis XIV clock on the mantel seemed preternaturally loud in the oppressive silence.

Suddenly and unreasonably Gard choked with fear. In one bound he crossed the room and stood staring down at the face of his host. For an instant he stood paralyzed with amazement and horror. Then, as always, when in the heart of the tempest, he became calm, and his mind, as if acting under some heroic stimulant, became intensely clarified. Mahr was dead. He leaned forward and lifted the head; the body was still warm, and it fell forward, limp and heavy. On the left temple was a large contusion and a slight cut. The cause was not far to seek. On the table lay an ancient flintlock pistol, somewhat apart from a heap of small arms belonging to an eighteenth century trophy.

Murder! Murder—and Mrs. Marteen! His imagination pictured her beautiful still face suddenly becoming maniacal with fury and pain. Gard suppressed an exclamation. Well, he would swear Mahr was alive at half after eleven, when he had seen him. If anyone knew of her coming before that, she would be cleared. No one knew of his

own feud with Mahr; no one suspected it. His word would be accepted.

Mahr's face, repulsive in life, was hideous in death—a mask of selfishness, duplicity and venomous cunning from which departing life had taken its one charm of intelligence. He looked at the wound again. The blow must have been sudden and of great force. Acting on an impulse, he tiptoed to one of the curtained windows, unlocked the fastening and raised it slightly. A robbery—why not? Silently moving back into the room, he approached the corpse and with nervous rapidity looted the dead man of everything of value, leaving the torn wallet, a wornout crumpled affair, lying on the floor. He opened and emptied the table drawers, as if a hurried search had been made. Slipping the compromising jewels into his overcoat pocket, he turned about and faced the room like a stage manager judging of a play's setting. The luxurious furnishings, the long mahogany table warmly reflecting the lights of the heavily shaded lamp; the wide, gaping fireplace; the lurking shadows of the corners; the curtain by the opened window bellying slightly in the draught: above, in the soft radiance of the hooded electric, the glowing, living, radiant personality of the Vandyke; below, the stark, evil face of the dead, with its blue bruised temple and blood-clotted hair.

Gard strove to reconstruct the crime as the next entrant would judge it—the thief gliding in by the window; the collector busy over the examination of his curios; the blow, probably only intended to stun; the hasty theft and stealthy exit.

His heart pounded in his breast, but it was with outward calm that he crossed the threshold, calling back a "Good night," whose grim irony was not lost upon him. In the hall, as he put on his hat, he addressed the servant casually:

"Mr. Mahr says you may lock up and go. He does not want to be disturbed, as he has some papers that will keep him late. Remind Mr. Mahr to call me at the New Willard in the morning; I may have some news."

As he left the house he staggered; he

felt his knees shaking. With a superhuman effort he steadied himself—Denning must not suspect anything unusual. He descended the steps with a firm tread, and pausing at the last step, twisted as if to reach an uncomfortably settled coat collar—his quick glance taking in the contour of the house and the probability of access by the window. The glimpse was reassuring. By means of the iron railing a man might readily gain the ledge below the first floor windows. He entered the limousine and nodded to Denning.

"All right," he said. "On to Washington."

IX

THROUGH the long hours of the night Gard lay awake, living over the gruesome moments spent in the ill-omened house on Washington Square. The ghastly face of the dead man seemed to stare at him from every corner of the luxurious room.

Had he done wisely, Gard wondered, in setting the scene of robbery? Had he done it convincingly? That he could become involved in the case in another character than that of witness, occurred to him, but he dismissed it with a shrug. He was able, he felt, to cope with any situation. Nevertheless, the valuables he had taken from the corpse seemed to take on bulk. He thanked his stars that his valet was not with him—at least he would not have to consider that ever present danger of discovery. He had hoped to dispose of the compromising articles while crossing the ferry, but when, on his suggestion of the benefits of cool night air, he had descended from the motor and advanced to the rail, Denning had accompanied him and remained at his elbow, discussing future moves in their giant financial game. Once on board the private car, he had considered disposing of the jewels from the car window or the observation platform, but abandoned that scheme as worse than useless. The track walkers' inevitable discovery would only bring suspicion upon someone traveling along the line—and who but himself must eventually be suspected?

There was nothing for it but to break up the horde piece by piece and lose the compromising gems in unrecognizable fragments. The impulse was upon him to switch on the electric and begin the work of destruction here in his state-room at once. But he feared Denning; he feared Langley. Then his thoughts reverted to Mrs. Marteen. Where was she? Where was she hiding? Had she made away with herself after her desperate deed? His heart ached and yearned toward her while his senses revolted in horror of the crime. His world was torn asunder. The awful discovery he had made had once and for all precluded a change of plans. Sudden resistance on his part would have been enigmatical to Denning—or he must confess the state of affairs in the silent house he had just left. At least by his ruse he had gained time for her, perhaps even protection.

Her letter, her frantic record of pain and misery, was in his pocket. He found it, and feeling that even if he were observed to be absorbed in reading, it could only appear natural in view of his mission, he propped himself with pillows and reread the tear-blistered pages. His spirit rebelled. No, no; the woman who had written those searing, bitter lines of awakening could not be guilty of monstrous murder. He hated himself that his mind had accused her. He cursed himself that by his intervention he had perhaps thrown investigation upon the wrong scent, while the truth, he assured himself, must exonerate her and bring the real criminal to justice. What could have made him be such a fool? The next instant he thanked his stars that he had been cool enough to plan the scene. As he read the throbbing pages, tears rose to his eyes again and again; he had to lay the letter down and compose himself. Ah, he was wrong, always at fault. By his well intended interference, he had arranged Dorothy's flight, with results he trembled to remember. And Dorothy! What was he to tell the child? How was he to prepare her to bear the present strain and the knowledge of what might come?

The fevered hours passed slowly. It

was with a wrenching effort that he forced his mind to concentrate on the business in hand for the coming day. Yet, for his own honor and the sake of his people, it must be done, and well done. Moreover, there must be no wavering on his part, nothing to let anyone infer an unusual disturbance of mind. He must be prepared to play shocked surprise when the tragic news reached him.

Utter exhaustion finally overpowered his fevered brain and he fell into a troubled sleep, from which he was aroused by Denning's voice. The car was not in motion, and he divined that it had been shunted to await their pleasure. He dressed hastily, his heart still aching with dread and uncertainty.

As he faced himself in the mirror he noted his sunken eyes and ghastly color, and Denning, entering behind him, noted it, too, with a quick thrill of sympathy. He had come to accept as fact his fear, expressed in the directors' room. Gard must be suffering from some deadly disease.

"You look all in, Gard," he said regretfully. "I'm sorry I had to drive you so." He hesitated. "Has—have the doctors been giving you a scare about yourself?"

Gard divined the other's version of his strange actions, and jumped at an excuse that explained and covered much.

"Don't talk about it," he said gruffly. "You know it won't do to have rumors about my health going round."

Denning took the remark as a tacit acquiescence. His face expressed genuine sympathy and compassion.

"I'm sorry," he said slowly.

Gard looked up and frowned, yet the kindness extended, though it was for an imaginary reason, was grateful to him.

"Well, I can take all the extra sympathy anyone has just now," he answered in a tone that carried conviction. "I've had a good deal to struggle against recently—but I'm not whipped yet."

"Oh, you'll be all right," Denning encouraged. "You're a young man still, and you've got the energy of ten young

bucks. I'll back you to win. Cheer up; you've got a hard day ahead." Gard nodded. How hard a day his friend little guessed. "We'll go on to the hotel when you are ready. Your first appointment is at nine thirty. Jim is making breakfast for us here."

"All right," said Gard; "I'll join you in a minute. Go ahead and get your coffee." Left alone, he hurriedly pocketed Mahr's jewelry, paused a moment to grind the stone of the scarfpin from its setting—among the cinders of the terminus the gem and its mangled mounting could both be easily lost. His one desire now was to put himself in telephonic communication with New York, but he did not dare to be too pressing. However, once at the hotel, he made all arrangements to have a call transferred, and opened connection with Brencherly. He was shaking with nervousness. "Any news?" he asked.

"None, Mr. Gard, I'm sorry," the detective's voice sounded over the wire, "except that I've followed your instructions with regard to the young lady. I've not left the phone, sir; slept right here in your armchair. The hospitals have been questioned, and there is nothing reported at police headquarters that could possibly interest you. I've looked over the morning papers carefully to see if there was anything the reporters had that might be a clue. There's nothing. I took the liberty of sending Dr. Balys over to the young lady this morning—she seemed in such a state; he'll be back any minute, though. I've got every line pulling on the quiet. I've done my best, sir."

Brencherly's voice ceased, and Gard drew a sigh of relief. At least there was no bad news, and as yet nothing in public print concerning the tragedy. The discovery had probably been made early that morning by the servant, whose duty it was to care for the master's private apartments. The first afternoon papers would contain all the details, and perhaps the ticker would have the news before. He realized that all the haggard night he had been fearing that the morning would bring him knowledge of Mrs.

Marteen's death—drowned, asphyxiated, poisoned—the many shapes of the one terrible deed had presented themselves to his subconscious mind, to be thrust away by his stubborn will. Dorothy, summoned to the telephone, had nothing to add to Brencherly's information, but seemed to derive comfort and consolation from Gard's assurances that all would be well. She would call him again at noon, she said.

He came from the booth almost gladly. His step was light, his troubled eyes clear once more. He was ready to play his part in every sense, grateful for the respite from his pain. His confidence in himself returned, and he went to the trying and momentous meetings of the morning with his gigantic mental grasp and convincing methods at their best.

Dorothy's message did not reach him till after midday had come and gone. Once Larkin had left the conclave and returned with his face big with consternation and surprise. Gard divined that the news of the murder was out, but nothing was brought up except the business of the corporation.

When at last he left the meeting he motored back to the hotel, refusing the hospitality cordially extended to him, his one desire to be again in touch with events transpiring in New York. He had hardly shown himself in the lobby when a page summoned him to the telephone.

It was Dorothy, her voice faint with fright.

"It's you," she cried—"it's you! Have you learned anything about mother? We haven't any news—nothing at all. Mr. Brencherly and the doctor tell me that everything's being done. But I'm almost wild—and listen: something awful has happened. It's your friend, Mr. Mahr, Teddy's father—he's been murdered!"

"What!" exclaimed Gard, thankful that she could not see his face.

"Yes, yes," she continued, "murdered in his own room—they found him this morning—they say you were the last person to see him before it was done. Oh, Mr. Gard, aren't you coming home

soon? It seems as if terrible things happen all the time—and I'm frightened. Please, come back!"

The voice choked in a sob, and her hearer longed to take her in his arms and comfort her, shield her from the terrible possibilities that loomed big on their horizon.

"My darling little girl, I'm coming, just as fast as I can. I wouldn't be here, leaving you to face this anxiety alone, if I could possibly help it—you know that, dear," he pleaded. "I've one more important, unavoidable interview; then my car couples on to the first express. Give Teddy all my sympathy. I can hardly realize what you say. Why, I saw him only last night just before I took the train. Keep up your courage, and don't be frightened."

"I'll try—" came the pathetic voice; "I will—but, oh, come soon!"

Gard excused himself to everyone, pleading the necessity of rest, and once alone in his room, set about ripping and smashing the incriminating evidence, until nothing but a few loose stones and crumpled bits of gold remained. He broke the monogrammed case of the watch from its fastening and crushed its face. Now to contrive to scatter the fragments would be a simple matter. He secreted them in an inner pocket, and his pressing desire of their destruction satisfied, he telephoned to Langley to join him in his private room at a hurried luncheon. Next he sent for the afternoon papers. Not a line as yet, however; and Langley and Denning having evidently decided it to be unwise to deflect his thoughts from matters in hand, did not mention Mahr. Even when he brought up the name himself with a casual mention of the possibility of acquiring the Heim Vandyke, there was nothing said to give him an opportunity to speak and he was breathless for details, to learn whether or no his ruse had succeeded. At last he called Brencherly, both Denning and Langley endeavoring to divert him from his intention.

"Yes, yes," snapped Gard; "what's the news?"

His companions exchanged dubious glances.

"Nothing learned yet about the matter, sir, on which you engaged me, nothing at all. But—there's something else—I think you ought to know—Victor Mahr is dead!"

"Dead! How? When?" Gard feigned surprise.

"Murdered last night," came the reply. "Found this morning. Our man watching the house learned it as soon as anyone did. A case of robbery, they say—but the coroner's verdict hasn't been given yet. He was hit in the head with a pistol—but—I think, sir, they'll want you; you saw him last night, they say—after you left me. Have you any instructions to give me, sir?"

Gard reflected. "I don't know," he wavered. "Hold all the good men in your service you can for me—and remember what I told you." He turned to the two men. "Mahr's dead—murdered!" he blurted out, as if startled by the news.

They nodded. "Yes, we knew. But," Denning added, "we didn't want to upset you any further. It came out on the ticker at eleven. How are you feeling?" he asked with friendly solicitude. "I wish you'd eat something—you've not touched anything but coffee for nearly twenty-four hours."

"I can't," said Gard grimly. "Let's go to the Capitol and get it over with. Have you phoned Senator Ryan? I'm all right," he assured them, as he caught sight of Langley's dubious expression. "I want to get through here as quickly as possible and get back. I suppose you realize that I'll be wanted in the city in more ways than one. I was the last person, except the murderer, to see Mahr. Come on."

As they came from the Capitol at the close of their conference, Langley and Denning fell behind for a moment.

"What a wonder the man is!" exclaimed Denning with enthusiasm. "Sick as he is, and with all these other troubles on him, he's bucked up and buffaloed this whole thing into shape. He forgets nothing!"

Gard entered the motor first, and, as he leaned forward, dropped from the opposite window a fragment of twisted

gold. An hour later, in the waiting room they had traversed, a woman picked up a pigeon blood ruby, but the grinding wheels of trains and engines had left no trace of the trifles they had destroyed. In the yard near the private siding, a coupling hand came upon a twisted gold watch case, so crushed that the diamond monogram it once had boasted was unrecognizable.

"At every stop, Jim," said Gard, as he threw himself wearily into a lounging chair in the saloon end of the car, "I want you to go out and get me all the latest editions of the New York papers."

The negro bowed, disappeared into the cook's galley and returned with glasses and a bottle of champagne. He poured a glass, which Gard drank gratefully.

Gard heard Langley and Denning moving about their stateroom. The noise of the terminal rang an iron chorus, accompanied by whistles and the hiss of escaping steam. The private car was attached to the express, and the return journey began. His irritated nerves would have set him tramping panther-wise, but sheer weariness kept him in his chair. Presently his fellow travelers joined him, but he took little or no heed of their conversation. Once he drank again, a toast to the successful issue of their combined efforts. He lay back, striving to control his rising anxiety. What would the story be that would greet him from the heavy leads of the newspapers?

"Baltimore — Baltimore — Baltimore"—the wheels seemed to pound the name from the steel rails; the car rocked to it. By the time they reached that city the New York afternoon editions would have been distributed. At last they glided up to the station and the porter swung off into the waiting room. Gard rose and stood waiting, chewing savagely on his unlighted cigar.

"It's Mahr," he apologized to Denning. "I want to learn the facts." His hand shook as he snatched the smudgy sheets from the negro.

In big letters across the front page he caught the headline:

MURDER OF VICTOR MAHR

FAMOUS CLUBMAN AND FINANCIER

Stabbed to Death in His Own Library

Evidence of Robbery

WOMAN SUSPECTED OF THE CRIME

"Stabbed to death . . . Woman suspected." His brain reeled. How "stabbed to death"? He himself had seen— "Woman suspected." Then all his despairing efforts to save her had been in vain! The train, starting suddenly, gave him ample excuse to clutch the back of the chair for support, and to fall heavily upon its cushions. He could not have held himself upright another moment. An absurd scheme flashed through his brain. He would, if necessary, take the blame upon himself—anything to shield her. He would say they had quarreled over the Vandyke.

He became aware that Denning was asking for one of the three papers he was clutching. He gave it to him, suddenly realizing that he was not alone. He knew his face was deathly, and he could feel his heart's slow pound against his ribs. If they did not believe him a sick man, they must believe him a guilty one. To control his agitation seemed impossible. The page swam before his eyes, and it was some moments before he could focus upon the finer print of the sensational article.

It seemed that the grewsome discovery was made by a servant, entering the library at eight that morning. She found her master lying in the chair and thought him asleep. She knew that the night before he had dismissed the butler, declaring his intention to sit up late over some important business. He might have been overcome by weariness. She tiptoed out and went in search of the valet. His orders had been to call his master at nine and he hesitated about waking him earlier, but at last decided to do so, as it was nearing the hour. On entering the apartment he had noticed the disorder of the room. He put out the electric light from the switch by the door, drew the curtains and raised the blind. At once he realized that death confronted him. Terrified, he had rushed to the hall calling for the serv-

ants. Theodore Mahr, Victor Mahr's only son, who was on his way to breakfast, rushed at once upon the scene.

There was a cut and contusion on the temple of the victim, evidently inflicted by a weapon lying upon the table, which was believed to be the cause of death, until the arrival of the coroner and Mr. Mahr's own physician, when it was discovered that the victim's heart had been pierced by a very slender blade or stiletto. The wound was so small and the aperture closed by the head of the weapon in such a manner that no blood had issued.

An enterprising reporter had gained access to the chamber of death, and described in detail the rifling of the drawers, the partially open window, and picked up a small gold link, evidently torn from the sleeve buttons of the deceased. Mr. Mahr was last seen alive by his friend, Marcus Gard, who called to see him on important business before taking his departure to Washington. Just prior to this, however, a strange woman, heavily veiled, had sent in a note and been admitted to Mr. Mahr. This woman was not seen to leave the house; in fact, the servant had supposed her present when Mr. Gard called, and a party to the business under discussion, and now believed that she might have remained concealed in the room until after the great financier had taken his departure. Of this, however, there was no present evidence. That Mahr had dismissed the butler and told him to lock up—yet the woman had not been seen to leave. Of course she could have let herself out, or Mr. Mahr could have opened the door for her—no one seemed to recall whether the chain was on in the morning or not.

Was the crime one of anger or revenge? Why, then, the robbery? The appearance of the table drawers would seem to indicate someone in search of papers, yet the dead man's valuables appeared to have been removed by force—the cuff link had been broken, the watch snatched from its pocket with such violence that the cloth had been torn. At present the mystery that surrounded the crime was impenetrable.

The dead man's son was prostrated with grief.

Gard finished reading and rose, crushing the paper in his hand. "It's a horrible thing—horrible! I hope you gentlemen will excuse me. I am not well, and this—has affected me—unaccountably." He turned to his stateroom. "I'm going to rest, if I can."

The two men looked at each other in deep concern.

"I hope we don't lose him," muttered Denning.

Alone in the silence of his swaying room, Gard threw himself face down upon the bed and gave way to panic. He could not reason any longer. His whole being gave way to a voiceless cry. He shook as if with cold, and beat his hands rhythmically on the pillows. He rolled over at last, and lay staring at the curved ceiling of the car. One thought obsessed him. She had been there, in that room, hidden—watching him, doubtless, as he committed the ghastly theft. Even in the awful situation in which she found herself, what must she think of *him*? Criminal, blackmailer, murderess, perhaps—but what could she think of him? The blood tingled through his veins and his waxen face flushed scarlet with vivid shame. In his weakened, overwrought condition, this aspect of the case outranked all others. He forgot the horrible publicity that threatened not only Dorothy and her mother but Victor Mahr's son—when the motive of the crime was learned. He forgot the yearning of his soul for the saving of its sister spirit. He forgot the dread vision of the chair of death in the keen personal shame of the creature she must believe him to be.

Suddenly a new angle of the case presented itself—Brencherly! He sat up gasping. Brencherly must have guessed—the inevitable logic of the situation led straight to the solution of the enigma. The detective knew of Mahr's efforts to obtain the combination of Mrs. Marteen's safe; he, himself, had told him that those efforts had been successful. Brencherly knew of Mrs. Marteen's sudden return, her visit to her home and her mysterious disappearance. The motive

of the murder was supplied, the disappearance accounted for. Already the detective's trained mind had doubtless pieced together the fragments of these broken lives. It was Brencherly who had told him of Mahr's former marriage. Everything, everything was in his hands. Would the man remain true to him? What wouldn't one of the great newspapers pay for the inside story! Could Brencherly be trusted? His well seasoned dislike of the whole detective and police service made him sure of treachery. But before him rose the vision of the boyish, candid face, as the detective had taken the Great Man's proffered hand, the honesty in his voice as he had given his word—"I'll do my best, sir," and into Gard's black despair crept a pale ray of hope.

Gard had not been mistaken when he surmised that Brencherly must inevitably connect the murder with the sequence of events. But the conclusion reached with relentless finality by that astute young man was far from being what Gard had feared. To the detective's mind the answer was plain—his employer was guilty.

The motive obviously concerned Mrs. Marteen. It was evident, from Mahr's efforts to gain access to that lady's safe, that she possessed something of which Mahr stood in fear or desired to possess. It was possible that she had obtained proof against Mahr. Perhaps she opposed young Teddy's attentions to her daughter. Perhaps Mahr was responsible for the disappearance. At any rate, Gard had been the last person to see Mahr as far as anyone knew; and a bitter feud existed, which no one guessed. Brencherly did not place great reliance in the woman theory. Doubtless one had called, but she had probably left. That she had gone out unseen was no astonishing matter. A servant delinquent in his hall duty was by no means a novelty even in the best regulated mansions. The robbery in that case could have been only a blind for an act of anger or revenge. The search for papers might have a deeper significance.

He intended to "stand by the boss," Brencherly told himself. Gard was a

great man and a decent sort; Mahr was an unworthy specimen. Brencherly decided that at all costs Marcus Gard must be protected. He cursed the promise that kept him at his post. He longed to get into personal touch with every tangible piece of evidence, every clue, noted and unnoted. His men were on the spot and reporting to him; but that could not make up for personal investigation. In view of these new developments, what would be Mrs. Marteen's next move? Some secret bond connected the three—Mahr, Gard and Mrs. Marteen.

Brencherly, alone in Gard's library, rose and paced the room, glancing at the desk clock every time his line of march took him past the table. His employer was coming home fast as steam could bring him. He longed for his arrival and the council of war that must ensue; longed to be relieved of the tedium of room-tied waiting. He no longer looked for any communication from Mrs. Marteen. She had her reasons for concealment, no doubt, and he felt assured that neither hospital nor morgue would yield her up. It was with genuine delight that he at last heard the familiar voice on the telephone, though it was but a hurried inquiry for news.

Half an hour later, haggard and worn beyond belief, Gard hurried into the library and held out his hand.

The young man looked at his face in astonishment as Gard threw himself into the chair and turned toward him.

"You'll pardon me," he faltered. "There's nothing that can't wait, and you need rest, sir."

"Not till I can get it without nightmares," he snapped. "Now give me this Mahr affair—all of it. I've seen the papers, of course, but I imagine you have the inside; then I want to hear what you think."

The detective gave a start and colored to the roots of his hair. No doubt about it, Gard was a great man, if he could meet such a situation in such a manner and get away with it.

"Well, sir, the papers have it straight enough this time, as it happens. There's nothing different."

"What was the weapon?"

"A stiletto paper cutter, that he always had on his table. It had a top like a fencing foil; in fact, that's what it was in miniature, except that it was edged. It was that top, flattened close down, that stopped any flow of blood, so that everyone thought at first it was the blow on the temple that killed him. There's this about it, though: I'm told they say he was stunned first and stabbed afterward. That doesn't look like the work of a common thief, does it?"

His hearer could not control a shudder. "Why not?" he parried. "He may have known the knockout was only temporary, and he was afraid he'd come to; or the man might have been known to Mahr, and he'd recognized him."

Brencherly shook his head incredulously.

"And the woman? What description did the servants give?" There was a perceptible pause before he asked the question.

"The woman? The description is pretty vague—tall, dressed in black, a heavy veil, black gloves; nothing extraordinary. The servant did say he thought her hair was gray, or it might have been light. He caught a glimpse of the back of her head when he showed her into the room. She sent in a note first; just a plain envelope; it wasn't directed."

"Did they find any letter or enclosure that might explain why she was admitted?"

"No, sir, nothing."

The two men eyed each other in silence. Each felt the other's reticence.

"And what do you advise now?" Gard inquired.

Brencherly looked away, fixing his gaze on the bronze inkwells.

"If I knew just how this event affected you, sir, I might be able to advise."

It was his employer's turn to look away.

"I know absolutely nothing about the cause of Mahr's death. I do know that there was no love lost between us; also that I was the last person known to have

been with him. Isn't that enough to show you how I am affected?"

"And the motive of your quarrel?" The detective felt his heart thump and wondered at his own daring.

"We were rival competitors for the Heim Vandyke—he got it away from me."

"Does that answer my question, sir?" Again Brencherly gasped at his own temerity.

"Young man," bellowed Gard, half rising from his chair, "what are you trying to infer?"

Brencherly stood up. "Please, Mr. Gard, be frank with me. I want to help you; I want to see you through. It can be done—I'm sure of it. No one knows about your trouble with Mahr. What he wanted with the combination of that safe I can't guess, but it was for no good; and you told me yourself that he had secured it. But everything may work out all right if you let me help you. I'm used to this cross-examination business, and I can coach you so they won't get a thing. I don't pretend to be in a class with you, sir; don't think I'm so conceited. I'm just specialized, that's all. I want to help, and I can if you'll let me."

Gard's face underwent a kaleidoscopic series of changes; then astonishment and relief finally triumphed, and were followed by hysterical laughter. Brencherly was disconcerted.

"Oh, so you think *I* did it!" he said at last. "I wish I had!" he added. "That wouldn't worry me in the least."

"Mrs. Marteen!" Brencherly exclaimed, and stood aghast and silent.

"No!" thundered Gard, and then leaned forward brokenly with his head in his hand.

Slowly the detective's mind readjusted itself, and the look in his eyes fixed upon Gard's bowed figure was all pitying understanding. Then he shook his head.

"No, she didn't do it," he said—"never! I don't believe it!"

The stricken man looked up gratefully, but his head sank forward again. "He had done a horrible thing to her," he said. "You're right; you must have

my confidence if you are to help—us. He had tried to estrange Dorothy from her mother. I—happened to be able to stop that. I used what you told me to quiet him. I threatened to tell his son the whole story. It was bluffing, for we knew nothing positive. But the story is all true. He was putty in my hand when I held that threat over him—putty. I went to him that night to dictate what he was to do in case he obtained any clue of Mrs. Marteen. I thought she might try to see him—to reproach him. We knew she was very ill, had been when she went away, and then—nerve shock. I went to him—and found him already dead. You understand—Mrs. Marteen—I couldn't but believe—so I set the stage for robbery. I bluffed it off with everyone. I gave the message to lock up and leave Mahr undisturbed. I wanted an alibi for her—or at least to gain time."

Brencherly remained silent. A man's devotion to another commands awe and respect, however it may manifest itself. But he was thinking rapidly.

"You know District Attorney Field, don't you?" he asked at length.

Gard nodded. "An old personal friend; but I can't go to him with that story. I'd rather a thousand times he suspected me than give one clue that would lead to her. I'll stick to my story. Field wouldn't cover up a thing like that—he couldn't."

"I know," returned Brencherly; "there's got to be a victim for justice first, or else prove that nothing, not even the ends of justice, can be gained before you can get the wires pulled. But that's what I'm setting out to do. I don't believe, Mr. Gard, that Mrs. Marteen committed that murder—not that there may not have been plenty of reason for it, but the way of it—no! I've got an idea. I don't want to say too much or raise any hopes that I can't make good; but there's just this: when I leave the house it will be to start on another trail. In the meantime, everything is being done that is humanly possible to find Mrs. Marteen. There's only one other way, and that, for the present, won't do—it's newspaper publicity, photographic

reproductions and a reward. I think she is somewhere under an assumed name. But there are two lodestones that will draw her if she is able to move. One is the house of Victor Mahr, and the other her own home. There is love and hate to count on, and sooner or later one will draw her within reach. I'll have the closest watch put about that I can devise. There's nothing you can do, sir—now. If you'll rest tonight, you'll be better able to stand tomorrow, and if I can verify my idea in the least I'll tell you. Let your secretary watch here; and good night, Mr. Gard."

X

THE woman in the narrow bed tossed in a heavy, unnatural sleep. Her lips were swollen and cracked with fever, her cheeks scarlet and dry. She was alone in a narrow, plain room, sparsely but newly furnished. On a dressing table an expensive, gold-fitted traveling bag stood open. Over a bentwood chair hung a costly dark blue traveling suit, and the garments scattered about the room were of the finest make and material. On the floor lay a diamond-encrusted watch, ticking faintly, and a gold mesh bag, evidently flung from under the pillow by the movements of the sleeper. This much the landlady noticed as she softly opened the unlocked door and stood upon the threshold.

"Dear, dear!" she murmured, and, habit strong upon her, she gathered up the scattered garments, folded them neatly, and hung up the gown in the scanty closet, having first examined the tailor's mark on the collar. "Dear, dear!" she said again. "It's noon; now whatever can be the matter? Is she sick? Looks like fever." Again she hesitated and paused to pick up a sheer handkerchief linen blouse, upon the Irish lace collar of which a circle of pinhead diamonds held a monogram of the same material. "H'm," ruminated the landlady. "Martin! Yes, there's an 'M,' and a 'Y' and a 'J'—h'm! She said she's a friend of Mrs. Bell's, but Mrs. Bell has been in Europe six

months. Wonder who her friends are, if she's going to be sick?"

She moved toward the bed to examine her guest more closely, but her attention was distracted by the luxuriousness of the objects in the dressing case. She fingered them with awe and observed the marking. She stooped for the purse and watch, which she examined with equal attention. Once more her eyes turned to the flushed face on the tumbled pillow. The sleeper had not awakened. The woman leaned over and took one of the restless hands in hers. "It's fever, sure," she said. At the touch and sound of her voice the other opened her eyes, wide with sudden astonishment. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Martin," said the visitor, "but it's after twelve o'clock, and I began to get anxious—you a stranger and all. I think, ma'am, you've a fever. Better let me call the doctor; there's one on the block."

The woman sat up in bed. "Mrs. Martin?" she said faintly. "Yes—I've— My head hurts—and my eyes—" She stared about her with a puzzled expression that convinced her observer that delirium had set in. "A doctor? Do I need a doctor? Why? What was it the doctor said? That my nerves were in—in—what was it? And I must travel and rest—yes, that was it; I remember now."

"Well," the other woman commented, "he doesn't seem to have done you a world of good, and you better try another."

"No," said Mrs. Marteen with decision, "no, I don't want one—not now, anyway. It's a headache. May I have some tea? Then I'll lie quiet, if you'll lower that blind, please."

"I'm sorry Mrs. Bell's away, or I'd send for her," ventured the landlady.

"Mrs. Bell?" the sick woman echoed with the same tone of puzzled surprise. "Why, she's away—yes—she's away." She sank back among the pillows and waved a dismissing hand.

Still the landlady waited. She deemed it most unwise not to call a doctor, but feared to make herself responsible for the bill since her guest refused. Moreover, she had seen enough to con-

vince her that the lady's visible possessions were ample to cover any bill she might run up through illness, provided, of course, it were not contagious. She turned reluctantly and descended to the kitchen to brew the desired tea.

Left alone, the patient sat up and looked about her with strained and frightened eyes. Then she began to wring her hands, slowly, as if such a gesture of torment was foreign to her habit. Her wide, clear brow knitted with puzzled fear. Her lips were distorted as one who would cry out and was held dumb. Presently she spoke.

"Where am I?" There was a long pause of nerve-racking effort as she strove to remember. "*Who* am I?" she cried hysterically. She sprang out of bed and ran to the mirror over the dressing table. The face that looked back at her was familiar, but she could not give it its name. A muffled scream escaped her lips, and she held her clenched fists to her temples as if she feared her brain would burst. "Martin!" she said at last. "Martin—she called me Mrs. Martin. Who is she? When did I come here?"

She seized her dressing case and went through its contents. Each article was familiar; they were hers; she knew their faults and advantages. The letter case had a spot on the back; she turned it over and found it there. Letter case—the thought was an inspiration. With trembling eagerness she clutched at the papers in the side pocket. Yes, there were letters. She read the address, "Mrs. Martin Marteen"—yes, that was herself. How strange! She had forgotten. The address was a steamer—that seemed possible. There was a journey, a long journey—she vaguely recalled that. But why? Where? She read the notes eagerly; casual *bon voyage* and good wishes; letters referring to books, flowers or bonbons. The signatures were all familiar, but no corresponding image rose in her brain. The last she read gave her a distinct feeling of affection, of admiration, though the signature "M. G." meant nothing. She reread the few scrawled sentences with a longing that frightened her. Who was

M. G.—that her bound and gagged mentality cried out for? She felt if she could only reach that mysterious identity all would be well. M. G. would bring everything right.

Suddenly the idea of insanity crossed her mind. She sat down abruptly. The room began to sway; her head ached as if the blows of a hammer were descending on her brow. She clutched the iron footrail to keep from being tossed from the heaving, rocking bed. The ceiling seemed to lower and crush her. Then an enormous hand and arm entered at the window and turned off the sun which was burning at the end of a gas jet in the room. All was dark.

She recovered consciousness slowly, aware of unmeasurable weakness. She lay very still, lying, as it were, within her body. She felt that should she require that weary body to do anything it must refuse. Through her half-closed lids she saw the woman who had first aroused her enter the room with a tray.

"Dear, dear!" she heard her say. "You must cover up. Don't lie on the outside of the bed; get under the covers."

To Mrs. Marteen's intense inner surprise, the weary body obeyed, crawling feebly beneath the sheets. She had not realized that she had lain where she had fainted, at the foot of the bed.

"Now take some tea," the controlling will went on; "you'll feel better; and a bit of dry toast. Sick headaches are awful, I know, and tea's the best thing."

Once more the body obeyed, and sat up and drank the steaming cup to the great comfort of the inner being. So reviving was its influence that Mrs. Marteen decided to try her own will and speak.

"Thank you"—her lips spoke, and she felt elated. She made another effort. "Thank you very much; it's most refreshing. No—no toast now—but is there some more tea?"

She drank it greedily and lay back upon the pillows with a sigh. Images were forming; memories were coming back now—scraps of things. There was a young girl whom she loved dearly. She had brown hair, very blue eyes and

a delicious profile. She was tall and slender. She wore a blue serge suit. Her name—was—was Dorothy. She spread her palms upon the sheet and felt it cool and refreshing.

"I'm afraid I've had a fever," she said slowly. "I think I have it still. I—I have such nightmares when I sleep—such nightmares." She shuddered.

"Well," said the landlady cheerfully, "you'll feel better now. Take it from me, tea's the thing." She gathered up the napkin, cup and saucer and placed them on the tray. "Well, I'll let you be quiet now, and I'll drop in again about five."

Now another memory came, a conscious thought connection. She remembered that Mrs. Bell had told her of her faithful landlady, Mrs. Mellen, with whom she always stopped when she came North; she remembered calling there many times for Mary, her smart motor waking the quiet, unpretentious street. Now she remembered recalling the boarding house and seeking shelter there in her fear and pain. Fear and pain—why, what was it? There was something cataclysmic, overpowering, that had happened. What could it be? Something was hanging over her head, some dreadful punishment. Her struggle to clear the mists from her brain rendered her more wildly feverish, then stupefied her brain to heavy sleep.

When she awoke again it was to see the kindly fat face of Mrs. Mellen beaming at her from the foot of the bed.

"That's it," she nodded approvingly; "you've had a nice nap. Head's better, I'm sure. Here's another cup of tea, and I brought you up the evening paper; thought you might want to look it over. And if you'll give me your trunk checks, I'll send the expressman after your baggage."

"My trunk checks—what did I do with them? Why, of course, I gave them to my maid."

A sudden instinct that she did not wish to see her maid, or be followed by her baggage, made her stop short in her speech.

"Oh, your maid!" said Mrs. Mellen. "I'm glad you told me—I'll have to hold

a room. You didn't say anything about her last night, so I hadn't made any provision. Dear, dear! And when do you calculate she's liable to get here?"

Mrs. Marteen took refuge in her headache. "I don't know," she said wearily; "perhaps not today."

"Oh, well, never mind. I dare say I can manage," Mrs. Mellen assured her. "If you've got everything you want, I'll have to go. Do you think you'll be able to get down to dinner—seven, you know; or would you rather have a plate of nice hot soup up here? Here, I guess. Well, it's no trouble at all, and you're right to starve your head; it's what I always do."

She backed smiling out of the door, which she closed gently.

Mrs. Marteen lay back with closed eyes for a moment, then restlessness seizing her, she sat bolt upright and firmly held her own pulse. "I'm certainly ill," she said aloud. "I wonder where Marie is? Of course I left her at the station, and told her to bring the baggage on. But that was long ago; what has kept her? But this isn't my home," she argued to herself. She was too weak to trouble herself with further questioning. Instinctively she put out her hand and drew the newspaper toward her. She raised it idly. "Murder of Victor Mahr"—the big headlines met her eyes.

She felt a shock as if a blinding flash of lightning had enveloped her; she remembered.

She sat as if turned to stone, staring at the ominous words. Her nerves tingled from head to foot; her very life seemed a strained and vibrating string that might snap with any breath. Slowly, as if the fates had decided not as yet to break that attenuated thread, the tingling, stinging shock passed. She found strength to read the whole article, almost intelligently, though at times her mind would wander to inconsequent things, and the beat of her own heart seemed to deaden her understanding. She remembered now everything, nearly everything, till she turned from her own door, a desperate, homeless outcast. She recalled a cab going somewhere, and then

after what appeared to be an interval of unconsciousness, she was walking, walking, instinctively seeking the darkened streets, a satchel in her hand. Somewhere, footsore and exhausted, she had sat upon a bench. Then came the inspiration to go to the quiet house where her friend had stayed. The friend was far away; she could remain there and not be found—stay until she had courage to do the thing that had suggested itself as the only issue—to end it all.

But who had killed Victor Mahr? She gave a gasp of horror and held up her hands—was there blood upon them? But how—how? Try as she would, no answering picture of horror rose from her darkened mind. There was a long, long period she could not account for—not yet; perhaps it would come back, as these other terrible memories had returned to assail her. She rolled over, hiding her face in the pillow, and groaned. The twilight deepened; the shadows thickened in the room.

Suddenly she rose and began dressing in frenzied haste, overcoming her bodily weakness with set purpose. Habit came to her rescue, for she was hardly conscious of her movements. Her toilet completed, she began hastily packing her traveling case, the impulse of flight urging her to trembling speed. But when she lifted the bag its weight discouraged her. Setting it down again upon the dressing table, she lowered her veil and staggered into the dark hallway. Economy dictated delayed illumination in the Mellen household. All was quiet. Somewhat reassured, she descended the stairs, leaning heavily on the rail. The fever which had relaxed for a brief interval renewed its grip, and filled with vague, indescribable fears, she fled blindly. Something in her subconscious brain suggested Victor Mahr, and it was toward Washington Square that she bent her hurried steps.

She entered the park, forcing her failing strength to one supreme effort, and sank, gasping, upon a bench. It faced toward the darkened residence of the murdered man. A few stragglers stood grouped on the pavement before the house, or asked questions of the police-

man stationed near by. The electric lights threw lace patterns that wavered over the unfrequented paths. She leaned back, staring at the dark bulk of the mansion with the darker streak at the doorway, which one divined to be the sinister mark of death. Suddenly she sat erect, her aching weariness forgotten. She knew, past peradventure, that *she had sat there upon that very seat the night before*. The memory was but a flash. Already delirium was returning. She was powerless to move. Hours passed, and still she sat staring, unseeing, straight before her. Once a policeman passed and turned to look at her, but her evident refinement quieted his suspicions, and he moved on.

She was roused at last by a movement of the bench as someone took a place beside her. She looked up and vaguely realized that it was a woman, darkly dressed and heavily veiled like herself. She, too, leaned back and seemed lost in contemplation of the house opposite. Presently she raised the veil, as if it obstructed her vision too greatly, revealing a withered face, narrow and long, with a singularly white skin. She had the look of a respectable working woman, and her black-gloved hands were folded over a neat paper package. Her curious glance turned toward the lady beside her, and seemed to find satisfaction in the elegance that even the darkness could not quite conceal. She moved nearer, and with a birdlike twist of the head, leaned forward and frankly gazed in her companion's face. The other did not resent the action.

The woman slowly nodded her head. "Don't know what she's doin', not she. She's one of the silly kind." She put out a hand like a claw, and touched Mrs. Marteen's shoulder. Mrs. Marteen turned her flushed and troubled face toward the woman with something akin to intelligence in her eyes. "What are you settin' here fur, lady?" asked the woman harshly. "Watchin' his house? Well, it's no use; he won't come out again fur you or your likes—never again, never again," and she chuckled.

"I was here last night. I sat here last night," said Mrs. Marteen, her

mind reverting to its last conscious moment.

The woman peered at her closely, striving to see through the meshes of the veil where the electric light touched her cheek.

"You did? What fur? Was he comin' out to ye, or did ye want to be let inside?"

The insult was lost on the sufferer.

The woman shifted her position, and changed her tone to one of cunning ingratiation.

"Goin' to the funeral?" she inquired, and without waiting for an answer, continued to talk. "I am. I won't be asked, of course—they don't know I'm here; but I'm goin'. I wouldn't miss it—no, not for—nothing. I ought to have some crape, I know, but I don't see's I can. It would be the right thing, though. I'll ride in a carriage," she boasted. "I suppose they'll have black horses. I haven't seen anything back where I come from, so's I'd know just what *is* the fashionable thing. It'll be a fashionable funeral, won't it? He's a great big man, he is. Everybody knows him—and everybody *don't* know him; but I do—he's a devil! And women love him, always did love him, the fools! Why, *I* used to love him. You wouldn't think that now, would you? Well, I did." She laughed a broken cackle, and seemed surprised that her listener remained mute. She interrupted the silence in her own way. "Did you love him?" demanded the crone sneeringly.

"Love him—love him?" exclaimed Mrs. Marteen, her emotions responding where her mind was unreceptive. "I hated him—I hated him!"

"Of course you hated him. How could a lady help hating him?" murmured the questioner. "But would *you* have the courage to kill him—that's what I want to know!"

Under the inquisition Mrs. Marteen half roused to consciousness. She was in the semi-lucid state of a sleepwalker.

"Kill him!" She held up her hands and looked at them as she had done after reading the account of the murder. "I'm not sure I didn't kill him; perhaps I did—I can't remember—I can't re-

member," she moaned more and more faintly.

"Don't you take the credit of *that*!" shouted the woman, so loudly that a young man who had been aimlessly walking up and down as if intent upon some rendezvous, stopped short to gaze at them keenly.

The older woman, with a movement so rapid that it seemed almost prestidigitation, lifted and threw back her companion's veil. The young man gave a start and approached hastily, amazement in every feature. But the two women were unaware of his presence, and what he next heard made him pause, turn and by a slight detour come up close behind the bench.

"Keep your hands off. Don't you say you killed him. What right have you to take his life, I'd like to know! Don't let me hear you say that again—don't you dare! Just remember that killing him is *my* business. You sha'n't try to rob me—it's my right!" She leaned forward threateningly.

A hand closed over her wrist. The woman screamed.

"Hold on, mother, none of that." The young man, still retaining his hold, came from behind the seat and stood over her.

She began to whimper and tremble. "Don't hit me," she begged pitifully. "Don't hit me, and I'll be good, indeed, I will."

Mrs. Marteen had taken no notice of her providential protector. Her head was sunk upon her breast and her hands hung limp in her lap.

The young man whistled twice, never relaxing his hold. A moment later a form detached itself from the group before the door, crossed the street and joined them quickly, yet with no impression of hurry. "What's up?" the newcomer asked quietly.

"Here, take hold. Don't let her get away from you." With a glance round, he took a hypodermic needle from his pocket, and a quick prick in the wrist instantly quieted the struggling captive. "Get a cab," he ordered, "and bring her over to my rooms. The utmost importance—not a sound to anybody. I've

got my job cut out for me—no police in this, mind."

He turned, his manner all gentleness. "Mrs. Marteen—Mrs. Marteen," he repeated. She raised her head slightly. "Will you come with me? My name is Brencherly, and Mr. Gard sent me for you. Come."

She rose obediently. The name he had spoken seemed to inspire confidence, trust and peace, like a word of power; but her limbs refused to move, and she sank back again. Brencherly took her unresisting hand in his, felt her pulse and shook his head.

"Long!" he called to his companion. "Get a cab. I'll take Mrs. Marteen; stop somewhere and send a taxi back for you; it might look queer to see two of us with unconscious patients."

When his subordinate turned to go, Brencherly leaned toward the drugged woman, took the bundle from her listless hands and rapidly examined its contents. A coarse nightdress, a black waist and a worn and ragged empty wallet rewarded his search. He tied them up again, put the package in its place and turned once more to Mrs. Marteen. "She's a mighty sick woman," he murmured. "Well, it's home for hers, and then me for the old man."

A taxi drove up, and his assistant descended. With his help Brencherly half supported, half carried his charge to the curb.

Directing the chauffeur to stop at a nearby hotel before proceeding to Mrs. Marteen's apartment, he climbed in beside the patient, and as the machine gathered headway, murmured a fervent "Thank God!"

XI

WITH Dorothy clinging to his hand, Marcus Gard watched the door of Mrs. Marteen's library with an ever growing anxiety. Only the presence of the child, who clasped his hand in such fear and grief, kept him from giving way. The long reign of terror that had dragged his heart and mind to the very edge of martyrdom had worn thin his already exhausted nerves, and now—now that the

lost was found again, it was to learn by what a slender thread of life they held her with them.

Every moment he could spare from the demands of his responsibilities was spent in close companionship with Dorothy in the house where only the sound of soft-footed nurses, the clink of a spoon in a medicine glass or the tread of the doctor mounting the stairs broke the waiting silence. For many days she had not known them. Now came intervals of consciousness and coherence, but weakness so great that the two anxious watchers, unused to illness, were appalled by the change it wrought. Now for the twentieth time they sat longing for and yet fearing the moment when Dr. Balys, with his friendly eyes and grim mouth, would enter to them with the tale of his last visit and his hopes or fears for the next.

The lamps were lighted, the shades drawn; the fire crackled quietly on the hearth. The room was filled with the familiar perfume of violets, for Dorothy, true to her mother's custom, kept every vase filled with them.

Silently Gard patted the little cold hand in his, as the sound of approaching footsteps warned them of the doctor's coming. In silence they saw the door open, and welcomed with a throb of relief the smile on the physician's face.

"A great, a very great improvement," he said quickly, in answer to Dorothy's supplicating eyes. "Quite wonderful. She is a woman of such extraordinary character that, once conscious, we can count on her own great will to live to save the day for us—and tomorrow you shall both see her. Tonight, little girl, you may go in and kiss her, very quietly—not a word, you know. Just a kiss and go."

"Now?" whispered Dorothy, as if she were already in the sick room. "May I go now?"

"Yes. No tears, you know, and no huggings—just one little kiss—and then come back here."

Dorothy flew from the room, light and soundless as blown thistledown. The doctor turned to his friend.

"There is something troubling her,"

he said gravely, "something that is eating at her heart. Ordinarily I wouldn't consent to anyone seeing her so soon; but she called for you in her delirium; and now that she is conscious, she whispers that she must consult you. Perhaps you can relieve her trouble, whatever it is. I'm going to chance it; when Dorothy has seen her, you may. I don't know exactly what to say, but—well, answer the question in her eyes, if you can—but only a moment—only give her relief. She must have no excitement."

Gard nodded.

"I think I know," he said slowly. "She was worried when she went South—worried about Dorothy; and finding her gone when she came back, which was my fault, by the way, may have precipitated the stroke. I can help her, I know."

The doctor nodded in understanding, as the girl appeared, her face drawn by emotion.

"Oh, poor mother!" she gasped. "She seemed—so—I don't know why—grateful—to me—thanked me for coming to her—thanked me, Dr. Balys, as if I wasn't longing every minute to be with her! She is not quite over her delirium yet, do you think?"

Balys smiled. "Of course she is grateful to see you. Your mother has been very close to the Great Divide, and she, more than any of us, realizes it. Now," he said, turning to Gard, "go in and make your little speech; and, mind you, say your word and go. No conversation with my patient."

Gard stood up, excitement gripping him. He was to see her eyes again, open and understanding. He was to hear her voice in coherent tones once more! The realization of this wonder thrilled him. He went to her presence as some saint of old went to the altar, where, in a dream, the vision of miracle had been promised him. All the pain and torture of the past seemed nothing in the light of this one thing—that she was herself again, to meet him hand to hand and eye to eye. He entered the quiet room and crossed its dimly lighted spaciousness to the bed. The nurse rose tactfully and

busied herself among the bottles on the distant dresser.

At last, after the ordeal that they had gone through, each in the lonely, hollow torture chamber of the heart, they met, and knew. With a sigh of understanding, she moved her waxen fingers, and, comprehending her gesture, he took her hand and held it, striving to impart to her weakness something of his own vigor. For a moment they remained thus. Then into her eyes, where at first great repose had shone, there came a gleam of questioning. He leaned close above her to catch her whispered words.

"She doesn't know?"

"No," he answered. "Dorothy came to me with his letter. I got everything from the safe, and I sent her away so no further messages might reach her. Now do you see?"

She looked up at him dumbly.

Again he took her hand in his and strove to give it life, as an infusion of blood is given through the veins.

There was silence for a moment. Then her white lips framed a request.

"Bring them—all the things from the inner safe—bring them tomorrow to me." Her eyes turned toward the fire that glowed on the hearth.

He comprehended her intention.

"Tomorrow," he murmured, and, turning, softly left the room. With a few words to Dorothy he hurried from the house and instinctively sought the sanctuary of his library.

The following day found him at the usual morning hour in conference with Dorothy. The girl was radiant. The nurses had reported a splendid sleep and a calm awakening. She had been allowed a moment with her mother, whose voice was no longer faint, but was regaining its old vibrant quality.

The doctor entered smiling and grasped Gard's extended hand.

"You said it," he laughed. "Whatever it was, you said it, all right. Mrs. Marteen slept like a child, and there's color in her face today. See if you can do as well again. I'll give you five minutes—no, ten."

Preceded by the doctor, he once more found his way through the velvet-

hushed corridors to the softly lighted bedroom, where lay the woman who had absorbed his every thought. Her eyes, as they met his, were bright with anxiety, and her glance at the doctor was almost resentful. But it was not part of the physician's plan to interfere with any confidence that might relieve the patient's mind. With a casual nod to Mrs. Marteen, he called to the nurse and led her from the room, his finger rapidly tapping the sick-room chart, as if medical directions were first in his mind.

Left alone, Gard approached the bed, and in answer to the unspoken question in her eyes, fumbled in his pocket and brought forth the thin packets of letters and the folded yellow cheques. One by one he laid them where her hands could touch them. He dared not look at her. He felt that her newly awakened soul was staring from her eyes at the mute evidence of a degrading past.

A moment passed in silence that seemed a year of pain; then, without a sob, without a sigh, she slowly handed him a bundle of papers, withholding them only a moment as she verified the count; then, with a slight movement she indicated the fireplace. He crossed to it and placed the papers on the coals, where they flared a moment, casting wavering shadows about the silent room, and died to black wisps. Again and again he made the short journey from the bed to the grate; each time she verified the contents of the envelopes before delivering them to his hand.

Last of all the two yellow cheques crisped to ashes. He stood looking down upon them as they drooped and collapsed into cinders, and from their ashes rose the phoenix of happiness. A glow of joyful relief lighted his spirit. There, in those dead ashes, lay a dead past—a past that might have been the black future, but was now relinquished forever, voluntarily—gone—gone! He realized a supreme moment, a turning point. Fate looked him in the eyes.

He turned, and saw a face transfigured. There was a light in Mrs. Marteen's eyes that matched the glow in his own heart. Very reverently he raised

her hand and kissed it; two sudden tears fell hot upon her cheeks and her lips quivered.

He had never seen her show emotion, and it went to his heart. He saw her gaze at her hands with dilating eyes, and divined before she spoke the question she whispered:

"Who killed Victor Mahr?"

He bent above her gravely. "His wife. The wife he had cruelly wronged—his wife, who escaped at last from an asylum. She is quite mad—now. She is in our hands, and tonight, at eleven o'clock, the district attorney will be at my house to see her and have the evidence laid before him—to save Teddy," he added quickly.

She looked at him wildly. "His wife—the wife that I—"

He took her hand quickly. He feared to hear the words that he knew she was about to say.

"Yes," he nodded. "Yes—she killed him."

Mrs. Marteen sank slowly back upon her pillows and lay with closed eyes. A heavy pulse beat in the arteries at her throat, and a scarlet spot burned on either cheek.

"Nemesis," she murmured. "Nemesis." She lay still for a moment. "Thank God!" she said at length, and let her hands fall relaxed upon the counterpane. She seemed as if asleep but for the quick intake of her breath.

Gard gazed upon her with infinite tenderness, yet with sudden bitter consciousness of the isolation of each individual soul. She was remote, withdrawn. Even his eager sympathy could not reach the depths of her self-tortured heart. But now at last he knew her, a completed being. The soul was there, palpitant, awake. The something he had so sorely missed was the living and real presence of spirit. It came over him in a wave of realization that he, too, had been unconscious of his own higher self until his love had made him feel the need of it in her. They two, from the depths of self-satisfied power, had gone blindly in their paths of self-seeking—till each had awakened the other. A strange, retarded spiritual birth.

He looked back over his long career of remorseless success with something of the self-horror he had read in her eyes as he had placed the incriminating papers in her frail hands. And as she had cast contamination from her, so he promised himself he would thrust predatory greed from his own life. They were both born anew. They would both be true to their own souls.

XII

THE softened electric light suffused a glamor of glowing color over the rich brocade of the walls of Marcus Gard's library, catching a glint here and there on iridescent plaques, or a mellow high light on the luscious patine of an antique bronze. The stillness, so characteristic of the place, seemed to isolate it from the whole world, save when a distant bell musically announced the hour.

Brencherly sat facing his employer, respecting his anxious silence, while they waited the coming of the district attorney, to whose clemency they must appeal—surely common humanity would counsel protective measures, secrecy, in the proceeding of the law. The links in the chain of evidence were now complete, but more than diplomacy would be required in order to bring about the legal closing of the affair without precipitating a scandal. Gard's own hasty actions led back to his fear for Mrs. Marteen, that in turn involved the cause of that suspicion. To convince the newsmongers that the crime was one of an almost accidental nature, he felt would be easy. An escaped lunatic had committed the murder. That revenge lay behind the insane act could be hidden. If necessary, the authorities of the asylum could be silenced with a golden gag—but the law?

Neither of the two men, waiting in the silent house, underestimated the importance of the coming interview.

The night was already far spent, and the expected visitor was still delayed. At length the pale secretary appeared at the door to announce his coming.

Gard rose from his seat, and extended

a welcoming hand to gray-haired, sharp-featured District Attorney Field.

Brencherly bowed with awkward diffidence.

Gard's manner was ease and cordiality itself, but his heart misgave him. So much depended upon the outcome of this meeting. He would not let himself dwell upon its possibilities, but faced the situation with grim determination.

"Well, Field," he said genially, "let me thank you for coming. You are tired, I know. I'm greatly indebted to you, but I'm coming straight to the point. The fact is, we," and he swept an including gesture toward his companion, "have the whole story of Victor Mahr's death. Brencherly is a detective in my personal employ." Field bowed and turned again to his host. "The person of the murderer is in our care," Gard continued. "But before we make this public—before we draw in the authorities, there are things to be considered."

He paused a moment. The district attorney's eyes had snapped with surprise.

"You don't mean to tell me," he said slowly, "that you have the key to that mystery! Have you turned detective, Mr. Gard? Well, nothing surprises me any more. What was the motive? You've learned that, too, I suppose."

"Insanity," said Gard shortly.

"Revenge," said the detective.

"Suppose," said Gard, "a crime were committed by a totally irresponsible person, would it be possible, once that fact was thoroughly established, to keep investigation from that person; to conduct the matter so quietly that publicity, which would crush the happiness of innocent persons, might be avoided?"

"It might," said the lawyer, "but there would have to be very good and sufficient reasons. Let's have the facts, Mr. Gard. An insane person, I take it, killed Mahr. Who?"

"His wife." Gard had risen and stood towering above the others, his face set and hard as if carved in flint.

Field instinctively recoiled. "His wife!" he exclaimed. "Why, man alive, *you* are the madman. His wife died years ago."

"No," said Gard. "Teddy Mahr's mother died. His wife is living, and is in that next room."

"What's the meaning of this?" Field demanded.

"A pretty plain meaning," Gard rejoined. "The woman escaped from the asylum where she was confined. According to her own story, she had kept track of her husband from the newspapers. Mahr couldn't divorce her, but he married again, secure in his belief that his first marriage would never be discovered. Mad as she was, she knew the situation, and she planned revenge. Dr. Malky, of the Ottawa Asylum, is here. We sent for him. The woman has been recognized by Mahr's butler as the one he admitted. There is no possible doubt. And her own confession, while it is incomplete in some respects, is nevertheless undoubtedly true.

"But, Field, this woman is hopelessly demented. There is nothing that can be done for her. She must be returned to the institution. I want to keep the knowledge of her identity from Mahr's son. Why poison the whole of his young life; why wreck his trust in his father? Convince yourself in every way, Mr. Field, but the part of mercy is a conspiracy of silence. Let it be known that an escaped lunatic did the killing—a certain unknown Mrs. Welles—and let Brencherly give the reporters all they want. For them it's a good story, anyway—such facts as these, for instance: he happened by in time to see an attack upon another woman on a bench opposite Mahr's house, and to hear her boast of her acts. But I ask as a personal favor that the scandal be avoided. Brencherly, tell what happened."

The detective looked up. "There was an old story—our office had had it—that Mahr was a bigamist. In searching for a motive for the crime, I hit on that. I had all our data on the subject sent up to me. I found that our informant stated that Mahr had a wife in an asylum somewhere. That gave me a suspicion. I found from headquarters that there were two escapes reported, and one was a woman. She had broken

out of a private institution in Ottawa. I got word from there that her bills had been paid by a lawyer here—Twickenbaur. I already knew that he was Mr. Mahr's confidential lawyer. But all this I looked up later, after I'd found the woman. You see, Mr. Gard is employing me on another matter, and after he returned from Washington, I gave my report to him here.

"Then I went over to Mahr's house. I had a curiosity to go over the ground. It was quite late at night, and I was standing in the dark, looking over the location of the windows, when I saw a woman acting strangely. She was threatening and talking loudly, crying out that she had a right to kill him. I sneaked up behind just in time to stop her attack on another woman who was seated on the same bench, and who seemed too ill to defend herself. Well, sir, I had to give her three hypos before I could take her along. Then I got her to my rooms, and when she came around, she told me the story. Of course, sir, you mustn't expect any coherent narrative, though she is circumstantial enough. Then I brought over the butler, and he identified her at once. Mr. Gard advised me not to notify the police until he had seen you. We got the doctor from the asylum here as quickly as possible. He's with her in there now."

The attorney sat silent a moment, nodding his head slowly. "I'll see her, Gard," he said at length. "This is a strange story," he added, as Brencherly disappeared into the anteroom.

Field's eyes rested on Gard's face with keen questioning, but he said nothing, for the door opened, admitting the black-clad figure of a middle-aged woman, escorted by a trained nurse and a heavily built man of professional aspect.

"This is—" Field asked, as his glance took in every detail of the woman's appearance.

"Mrs. Welles, as she is known to us," the doctor answered; "but she used to tell us that that was her maiden name, and she married a man named Mahr. We didn't pay much attention to what she said, of course, but she was forever

begging old newspapers and pointing out any paragraphs about Mr. Victor Mahr, saying she was his wife."

Field gazed at the ghastly pallor of the woman's face, the maze of wrinkles and the twinkling brightness of her shifting eyes, as she stood staring about her unconcernedly. Her glance happened upon Brencherly. Her lips began to twitch and her hands to make signals, as if anxious to attract his attention. She writhed toward him.

"Young man," she whispered audibly, "they've got me—I knew they would. Even you could not keep me so hidden they couldn't find me." She jerked an accusing thumb over her shoulder at the corpulent bulk of her erstwhile jailer. "They've been trying to make me tell how I got out; but I won't tell. I may want to do it again, you see."

"But," said Brencherly soothingly, "you don't want to get out now, you know. You've no reason to want to get out."

She nodded, as if considering his statement seriously.

"Of course, since I've got Victor out of the way, I don't much care. And I had awful trouble to steal enough money to get about with. Why, I had to pick ever so many pockets, and I do hate touching people; you never can tell what they may have." She shook out her rusty black skirt as if to detach any possible contagion.

"But, why," the incisive voice of the attorney inquired, "did you want to kill Victor Mahr?"

"Why?" she screamed, her body suddenly stiffening. "Suppose you were his wife, and he locked you up in places, and made people call you Mrs. Welles, while he went swelling around everywhere, and making millions! What'd you do? And besides, it wasn't only *that*, you see. I knew, being his wife and all, that he was a devil—oh, yes, he was; you needn't look as if you didn't believe it. But I soon learned that when I said I was 'Mrs. Victor Mahr' in the places he put me into, they laughed at me, the way they do at my roommate, who says she's a sideboard and wants to hold a teaset."

"Tell these gentlemen how cleverly you traced him," suggested Brencherly.

"Oh, I knew where he lived and what he was doing well enough." She bridled with conscious conceit. "I read the papers and I had it all written down. So when I got out and stole the money, I knew just where to go. But he's foxy, too. I knew I'd have to *make* him see me. So I stole some of the doctor's letterhead paper, and I wrote on it, 'Important news from the Institution'—that's what he likes to call his boarding house—an institution." She laughed. "It worked!" she went on as she regained her breath. "I just sent that message, and they let me go right in. 'Well, what is it—what is it?' Victor said, just like that." Her tones of mimicry were ghastly. She paused a moment, then broke out:

"Now you won't believe it, but I hadn't the slightest idea what I was going to kill him with when I went in there—I really didn't. The doctor will tell you himself that I'm awfully forgetful. But there, spread out before him, he had a whole collection of weapons, just as if he should say, 'Mamie, which'll you have?' I couldn't believe my eyes; so I said first thing, 'Why, you were expecting me!' He heard my voice, and his eyes opened wide; and I thought: 'If I don't do it now, he'll raise the house. So I grabbed the big pistol and hit him! I'm telling you gentlemen all this, because I don't want anyone else to get the credit. There was a woman I met on a bench, and I just was sure she was going to take all the credit, but I told her that was *my* business. I hate people who think they can do everything. There's a woman across my hall who says she can make stars—" She broke off abruptly as for the first time she became aware of Gard's presence in the room. "Why, there you are!" she exclaimed delightedly. "Now, that's good! You can tell these people what *you* found."

"But Mr. Mahr was stabbed, Mrs. Welles," Gard interrupted. "You said you struck him with a pistol."

"Oh, I did *that* afterward." She took up the thread of her narrative. "I

selected the place very carefully, and pushed the knife way in tight. I hate the sight of blood, and I sort of thought that'd stop it, and it did. Then, dear me, I had a scare. There's a picture in that room as live as life, and I looked up, and saw it looking at me. So I started to run out, but somebody was coming, so in the little room off the big one I got behind a curtain. Then this gentleman went through the room where I was, and into the room where *he* was. But he shut the door, and I couldn't see what he thought of it. After a while he came out and said good night to me, though how he knew I was there I can't guess. So I waited a very long time, till everything was quiet, and then I went back and sat with him. It did me good just to sit and look at him; and every little while I'd lift his coat to see if the little sword was still there. The room was awful messy, and I tidied it up a bit. Then when dawn about came, I got up and walked out. I had a sort of idea of getting back to the institution without saying anything, because I was afraid they'd punish me."

"Why did you rob Mr. Mahr?" asked Mr. Field.

"Rob nothing!" she retorted.

"But his jewels, his watch," the attorney continued, his eyes riveted on her face with compelling earnestness. The woman gave an inarticulate growl. "But," interposed Brencherly, "I found his wallet in your package." He took from his pocket a worn and battered leather pocketbook and held it toward her.

"Oh," she answered indifferently, "I just took it for a souvenir."

Brencherly shrugged his shoulders expressively. Gard sat far back in his chair, his face in shadow.

"How long has it been, Mrs. Welles, since you—accomplished your purpose?" he asked slowly.

"You know as well as I do," she cried angrily. "You were there. It was yesterday—no, the day before."

"It was just a week ago we found her," Brencherly said in a low voice. "I had to look up everything and verify everything."

"You don't think I did it?" she burst out angrily. "Well, I'll prove it. I tell you I did, and I thought it all out carefully, although the doctor says I can't think connectedly. I'll show him." She fumbled in the breast of her dress for a moment, and brought out a handful of newspaper clippings, which she cast triumphantly upon the table. "There's all about him from the papers, and a picture of the house. Why, I'd 'a' been a fool not to find him, and I had to. Oh, yes, I suppose, as the doctor says, I'm queer; but I wasn't when he first began sending me away—no, indeed. I wasn't good enough for him, that was all; and I was far from home, and hadn't a friend, and he had money. Oh, he was clever—but he's the devil. He used to file his horns off so people wouldn't see, but I know. So, I'll tell you everything, except how I got away. There's somebody else I may want to find." She glanced with infinite cunning at Brencherly, and began her finger signals as if practising some dumb alphabet of which he alone knew the key.

"Where did you receive her from, Doctor?" Field asked.

"From Ogdensburg, sir. Before that they told me she was found wandering, and put under observation in Troy. All I knew was that somebody wanted her kept in a private institution. She'd always been in one, I fancy."

There was a pause as Field seemed lost in thought. Then he turned to Gard.

"May I ask you to clear one point?" he asked. "You gave evidence that he was alive when you entered the room. According to her story—"

"I lied," said Gard, his pale face suffused with color. "I had to—I was most urgently needed in Washington. I would have been detained, perhaps prevented altogether from leaving. Who knows—I might even have been accused. I plead guilty of suppressing the facts."

There was silence in the room. The attorney's eyes were turned upon the self-confessed perjurer. In them was a question. Gard met their gaze gravely, without flinching. Field nodded slowly.

"You're right; publicity can only harm," he said at last. "We will see what can be done. I'll take the proper steps. It can be done legally and verified by the other witnesses. The butler identifies her, you say. It's a curious case of retribution. I can't help imagining Mahr's feelings when he recognized her voice. Is your patient at all dangerous otherwise?" He addressed himself to the nurse.

"No," she answered. "We've never seen it. Irritable, of course, but not vicious. I can't imagine her doing such a thing. But you never can tell, sir—not with this sort."

Field again addressed Gard, whose admission seemed to have exhausted him. "And the son—knows nothing?"

"Nothing," answered Gard. "He worships his father's memory. He is engaged, also, to—a very dear little friend of mine—the child of an old colleague. I want to shield them—both."

"I understand." He nodded his head slowly, lost in thought.

The woman, childishly interested in the grotesque inkwells on the table, stepped forward and raised one curiously. Her bony hands, of almost transparent thinness, seemed hardly able to sustain the weight of the cast bronze. It was hard to believe such a birdlike claw capable of delivering a stunning blow, or forcibly wielding the deadly knife. She babbled for a moment in a gentle, not unpleasant voice, while they watched her, fascinated.

"She's that way most of the time," said the nurse softly. "Just like a ten-year-old girl—plays with dolls, sir, all day long."

Suddenly her expression changed. Over her smiling wrinkles crept the whiteness of death. Her eyes seemed to start from her head, her lips drew back, while her fingers tightened convulsively on the metal inkstand. The nurse, with an exclamation, stepped forward and caught her.

There was a gleam of such maniacal fury in the woman's face that Mr. Field shuddered. "Hardly a safe child to trust even with a doll," he said. "I fancy the recital has excited her.

Hadn't you better take her away and keep her quiet? And don't let anyone unauthorized by Mr. Gard or myself have access to her. It will not be wise to allow her delusion that she was the wife of Victor Mahr to become known—you understand?"

Mr. Gard rose stiffly. "I will assume the expense of her care in future. Let her have every comfort your institution affords, Dr. Malky. I will see you tomorrow."

"Thank you, sir." The physician bowed. "Good night. Come, Mrs. Welles."

Obediently the withered little woman turned and suffered herself to be led away.

As the door closed, Field came forward and grasped Gard's hand warmly. "It is necessary for the general good," he said, his kindly face grown grave, "that this matter be kept as quiet as possible. Believe me, I understand, old friend; and, as always, I admire you."

Gard's weary face relaxed its strain. "Thanks," he said hoarsely. "We can safely trust the press to Brencherly. He," and he smiled wanly, "deserves great credit for his work. I'm thinking, Field, I need that young man in my business."

Field nodded. "I was thinking I needed him in mine; but yours is the prior claim. And now I'm off. Mr. Brencherly, can I set you down anywhere?"

Confusedly the young man accepted the offer, hesitated and blushed as he held out his hand. "May I?"

Gard read the good will in his face, the congratulation in the tone, and grasped the extended hand with a warm feeling of friendly regard.

"Good night—and, thank you both," he said.

XIII

SPRING had come. The silvery air was soft with promises of leaf and bud. Invitation to Festival and Adventure was in the gold-flecked sunlight. Nature stood on tiptoe, ready for carnival,

waiting for the opening measures of the ecstatic music of life's renewal.

The remote stillness of the great library had given place to the faint sounds of the vernal world. A robin preened himself at an open casement, cast a calculating eye at the priceless art treasures of the place, scorned them as useless for his needs, and fluttered away to an antique marble bench in the walled garden, wherefrom he might watch for worms, or hop to the Greek sarcophagus and take a bath in accumulated rain-water.

Marcus Gard, outwardly his determined, unbending self again, sat before his laden table, slave as ever to his tasks. Nine strokes chimed from the Gothic clock in the hall; already his busy day had begun.

Denning entered unannounced, as was his special privilege, and stood for a moment in silence, looking at his friend. Gard acknowledged his presence with a cordial nod, and continued to glance over and sign the typewritten notes before him. At last he put down his pen and settled back in his chair.

"Well, old friend, how goes it?" he inquired, smiling.

Denning nodded. "Fine, thank you. I thought I'd find you here. I was in consultation with Langley last night, and we have decided we are in a position now to go ahead as we first planned over a year ago. The opposition in Washington has been deflected. Besides, Langley dug up a point of law."

Gard rose and crossed to Denning. His manner was quietly conversational, and he twirled his *pince-nez* absently.

"My dear man," he said slowly, "you will have to adjust yourself to a shock. We will stick to the understanding as expressed in our interviews of last February, whether Mr. Langley has dug up a point of law or not. In short, Denning, we are not in future doing business in the old way."

"But you don't understand," gasped the lawyer. "Langley says that it lets us completely out. They can't attack us under that ruling—can't you see?"

"Quite so—yes. I can imagine the situation perfectly. But we entered

into certain obligations—understandings, if you will—and we are going to live up to them, whether we could climb out of them or not."

Denning sat down heavily.

"Well, I'll be— Why, it's no different from our position in the river franchise matter, not in the least—and we did pretty well with that, as you know."

Gard nodded. "Yes, we are practically in the same position, as you say. The position is the same—but *we* are different. I suppose you've heard a number of adages concerning the irresponsibility of corporations? Well, we are going to change all that. I fancy you have already noticed a different method in our mercantile madness, and you will notice it still more in the future."

Denning pulled his mustache violently, a token with him of complete bewilderment.

"H'm—er—exactly," he murmured. "Of course, if that's the way you feel now—and you have your reasons, I suppose—I'll call Langley up. He'll be horridly disappointed, though. He's pluming himself on landing this quick getaway for you. He's been staking out the whole plan."

Gard chuckled. "Do you remember, Denning, how hard you worked to make me go to Washington—and how my 'duty to our stockholders' was your favorite weapon? Where has all that noble enthusiasm gone—eh?"

Denning blushed. "But we were in a very dangerous hole. Things are different now."

"Yes," said Gard with finality, "they are—don't forget it."

"Well," and Denning rose, discomfited, "I'm going. Three o'clock, Gard, the directors' meeting. I'll see you then."

He shook hands and turned to the door, paused, turned again as if to reopen the subject, checked himself and went out.

As the door closed Gard chuckled. "I bet he's cracking his skull to find out my game," he thought with amusement. "By the time he reaches the office, he'll have worked it out that I'm more far-

sighted than the rest of them, and am making character; that I'm trying to do business by the Ten Commandments will never occur to him." He returned to the table and resumed his task, paused and sat gazing absently at the contorted inkwells.

His secretary entered quietly, a sheaf of letters in his hand.

"Saunders," said Marcus Gard, not raising his eyes from their absorbed contemplation, "did you ever let yourself imagine how hard it is to do business in a strictly honest manner, when the whole world seems to have lost the habit—if it ever *had* the habit?"

Saunders looked puzzled. "I don't know, sir. Mr. Mahr is in the hall and wants to see you," he added, glad to change the subject.

"Is he? Good. Tell him to come in." Gard rose with cordial welcome.

Teddy had aged in the past few months. There was an air of responsibility about him, calmness, observation and concentration, very different from his former light-hearted, easy-mannered boyishness. Gard's greeting was affectionate. "Well, boy, what brings you out so early? Taking your responsibilities seriously? And in what can I help you?"

Teddy blushed. "Mr. Gard," he said, hurrying his words with embarrassment, "I wish you'd let me *give* you the Vandyke—please do. I don't want to *sell* it to you. Duveen's men are bringing it over to you this morning; they are on their way now. I want you to have it. I—I—" He looked up and gazed frankly in the older man's face, unashamed of the mist of tears that blinded him. "I know father would want you to have it. And I know, Mr. Gard, what you did to shield his memory. If you hadn't gone to Field—if you hadn't taken the matter in charge—" He choked and broke off. "I don't *know* anything, and I don't want to know anything—but you handled the situation as I couldn't have done. Please—won't you take the Vandyke?"

Gard's hand fell on the boy's shoulder with impressive kindness. "No," he said quietly, "I can't do that, much as

I appreciate your wanting to give it to me. I have a sentiment, a feeling about that picture. It isn't the collector's passion—I want it to remind me daily of certain things, things that you'd think I'd want to forget—but not I. I want that picture 'In Memoriam'—that's why I asked you to let me have it; and I want it by purchase. Don't question my decision any more, Teddy. You'll find a cheque at your office, that's all." He turned and indicated a space in the silk-hung wall, where a reflector and electric lights had been installed. "It's to hang there, Teddy, where I can see it as I sit. It is to dominate my life—how much you can never guess. Will you stay with me now, and help me to receive it?"

Teddy was obviously disappointed. "I can't—I'm sorry. I ought to be at the office now; but I did so want to make one last appeal to you. Anyway, Mr. Gard, your cheque will go to enrich the Metropolitan purchase fund."

"That's no concern of mine," Gard laughed. "You can't make me the donor, you know. How is Dorothy—to change the subject!"

"What she always is," the boy beamed, "the best and sweetest. My, but I'm glad she is back again! And Mrs. Marteen, she's herself again. You've seen them, of course?"

Gard nodded. "I met them at the train last night. Yes—she is—herself."

"She had an awful close call!" Teddy exclaimed, his face grown grave.

There was reminiscent silence for a moment. With an active swing of his athletic body, Dorothy's adorer collected his hat, gloves and cane in one sweep, spun on his heel with gleeful ease, smiled his sudden sunny smile, and with a quick good-bye, left Gard standing before the space reserved for the masterpiece.

Left alone, the expression of his face and attitude changed. Grave and purposeful, he continued to regard the blank wall, then, turning, he caught up the desk telephone, gave Mrs. Marteen's private number and waited.

A moment later the sweet familiar voice thrilled him.

"It's I—Marcus," he said. "I am coming for you this morning. Yes, I'm taking a holiday, and I'm going to bring you back to the library to see a new acquisition of mine—that will interest you. Then you and Dorothy will lunch with Polly. Dorothy can join us at one o'clock. This is a private view—for you alone. . . . You will? That's good! Good-bye."

Noises in the resonant hall and the opening of the great doors announced the arrival of the moving van and its precious contents, before Saunders, his eyes bulging with excitement, rushed in with the tidings of the coming of the world famous Heim Vandyke. With respectful care the great canvas was brought in, unwrapped and lifted to its chosen hanging place.

Seated in his armchair, Gard with mixed emotions watched it elevated and straightened. The pictured face smiled down at him—impersonal yet human, glowing, vivid with color, alive with that suggestion of eternal life that art alone in its highest expression can give. Gard's smile was enigmatical; his eyes were sad. His imagination pictured to him Mrs. Marteen as she had sat before him in her self-contained stateliness and announced with indifferent calm that the Vandyke had been but a ruse to gain his private ear.

Gard rose, approached the picture, and for an instant laid his fingers upon its darkened frame. Strangely enough, the movement was that of a worshiper who makes his vow at the touch of some relic infinitely holy.

An hour later Gard led Mrs. Marteen to his waiting motor. Their meeting had been somewhat embarrassed, somewhat silent. The months that she had spent at the sanitarium, where she had been taken to recuperate, had been solitary. Letters had been exchanged, to be sure, daily letters, but they had been light, friendly, surface letters, giving no hint of the realities beneath. He gazed at her happily now, rejoicing in the firmness of her step, the brightness of her eyes, the healthy color of her skin. They drove in silence through the crowded

streets, each withdrawn yet vibrating with the other's presence. At the door of the great house he descended, gave her his hand and conducted her quickly through the vast, soft-lighted hall to his own sanctum. He closed the door quietly and pressed the electric switch. Instantly the mellow lights glowed above the portrait, which throbbed in response, a glittering gem of warmth and beauty.

Mrs. Marteen's body stiffened; the color receded from her face, leaving it ashen. Her great eyes dilated.

"Do you know why it is there?" he asked at length in a whisper.

"Yes," she murmured. "We have traveled the same road—you and I. I understand."

He took her hand and raised it to his lips. "You don't know all that this picture recalls to me—and I hope you will never know; but you and I," he said slowly, weighing his words, "are not of the breed of those who cry out with remorse. We are of those who live differently. That is the constant reminder of what *was*. I do not want to forget. I want to remember. Every time the iron enters my soul I shall know the more keenly that I have at last a soul."

Again they fell silent.

"According to the accepted code I suppose I should make a clean breast of it, even to Dorothy, and go into retirement," she said at length. "I have thought of that, too; but I cannot *feel* it. I want to be active; to be able to use myself for betterment; make of myself an example of good and not of evil. What I did was because of what I was. I am that no longer, and my expression must be of the new thing that has become me—a soul!" she said reverently.

"A soul," he repeated. "It has come to me, too. And what is left to me of life has no place for regrets. I have that which I must live up to—I *shall* live up to it."

"We have, indeed, traveled the same road; but you—have led me." She looked at him with complete comprehension.

"We will travel the new road together," he said finally, "hand in hand."

THE VOICE OF NEMESIS

By John G. Neihardt

YOU knew me of old and feared me,
Dreading my face revealed;
Temples and altars you reared me,
Wooded me with shuddering names;
Masking your fear in meekness,
You pæned the doom I wield,
Wrought me a robe of your weakness,
A crown of your woven shames.

Image of all earth's errors,
Big as the bulk of its guilt,
Lo, I darkled with terrors,
A demon of spite and grudge;
You made me a vessel of fury
Brimmed with the blood you spilt;
With devils of hell for jury,
You throned me a pitiless judge.

For ever the wage of sorrow
Paid for the lawless deed;
Never the gray tomorrow
Paused for a pious price;
Never by prayer and psalter
Perished the guilty seed;
Vain was the wail at the altar,
The smoke of the sacrifice.

I come like a crash of thunder,
I come as a slow-toothed dread;
With fire and sword to plunder
Or only with lust and sloth.
By star or sun I creep, I run,
And lo, my will was sped
By the might of the Mede, the hate of the Hun,
The bleak north wind of the Goth!

Yet, older than malice and cunning,
The love and the hate of your creed,
I smile in the blossom sunning,
I am hurricane lightning-shod!

THE SMART SET

Revealed in a myriad dresses,
 I am master or slave at need.
 You grope for my face with your guesses
 And kneel to your guess for a god!

The fall of a prince or a pebble;
 The call of the sea to the stream;
 The wrath of the starving rebel;
 The plunge of the April thaw;
 The yearning of things to be level;
 The germ of the deed in the dream;
 I am these—I am angel and devil—
 I am Law!



OBSESSION

By Deems Taylor

I HEAR thy voice—
 Calling me when the morning mists lie white;
 Calling me through the noonday's crashing light;
 And, haply, in the silence of the night,
 I hear thy voice.

I hear thy voice—
 Silencing all the feeble tongues of men.
 My stricken soul rebels; I strive again
 To break the bonds that hold me to thee, when
 I hear thy voice.

Aye, hear thy voice!
 Why must I serve the whim of such as thou?
 Why *do* I heed thy summons, anyhow?
 O telephone—confound it! Even now
 I hear thy voice!



GOD made man in His image, but many have trouble keeping up appearances.

THE MAN WHO WAS BORN TOO LATE

By Duffield Osborne

THE only serious trouble with Dalton was that he was born about three hundred years too late. Sixteen hundred A.D. would have been all right, and four or five even earlier dates in the world's history might have suited him well enough; but there's no use in making a thing any worse than it is, and some of the intervening periods would have been almost as unsatisfactory as the days among which his choice of parents had inconsiderately placed him. You see, it was this way: Dalton was romantic without being in the least brutal, which may sound as if I were trying to be paradoxical and smart. Think it over a bit and you'll see I'm not. Certainly antiquity had a most persistent way of mixing up romance and brutality.

One of Dalton's minor difficulties was that he was comfortably rich, which gave him altogether too much time to think about things that didn't suit him. Therefore he thought. I don't mean to say that he made a nuisance of himself to others. He was much too modern in matters of taste for that—much too diffident about boring people who wouldn't understand, with things that, to him, were very near and real. I doubt if more than two or three of his closest friends knew anything about it. To the rest he seemed like a very fortunate and properly contented young man.

I have often recalled that afternoon at the club—the afternoon when *it* happened. Randall and I got him started, or, at least, a casual remark of Randall's did, and then the discussion was on. We gave him the stock arguments about there being just as much true romance

today as there ever was, just as much chance for heroism, external and internal, and he listened respectfully.

"I suppose that's all true enough," he said, "and I'm not sure I can make it clear to you fellows why it doesn't fill the bill. Perhaps it isn't quite clear in my own mind, but I feel as if it were. Somehow, it doesn't seem, today, as if romance had any individuality. There's a big fire, or somebody falls overboard; the candidates for Carnegie hero medals spring up all about, and the newspapers duly herald their exploits the next morning. Why do they do it? I fancy it's mostly from an inbred sense of duty to one's fellow man which has become instinctive. It's a sort of socialistic heroism. There's no real romance to the thing, because romance is pure individualism. If you please, it may be a much better world, when a man feels that he's been a duffer if he doesn't rise to the occasion and risk his life whenever the occasion suggests it. All I say is that it isn't an interesting world. Neither is there any individualism in the regulation stock dangers we're up against—railroad and steamer smash-ups, runaways and such; and there's no individual credit in meeting them—just a sort of stock sentimentalism that's become second nature to the average 'white' man."

"But have you ever thought," said Randall, "of the trivial underlying chances that direct our lives? They're individual enough. We're walking up Madison Avenue, and we want to get to Fifth. There's no apparent reason why we should cross by Twenty-eighth Street

or Twenty-ninth. Some subconscious whim determines, and yet in one we are ground to a pulp under an automobile and in the other we meet the woman we marry. If the whim had struck us to take Thirtieth Street, we should have missed both—"

"Catastrophes," suggested Dalton. "But, don't you see, that doesn't meet my point. No one denies that chance plays its game just as hard as ever, but we have to play *our* hands very differently. Besides, both your automobile and your girl are dead commonplace hazards, about which the victim has nothing at all to say. You'll grant it readily as to the auto, but take your girl. You might meet her until you're black in the face, and it wouldn't do you any good, unless she happened to be with someone you knew who stopped and introduced you. If you try any individualism, you're 'no gentleman.' Therefore you pass a woman who might mean everything to you, with a very reasonable certainty that she'll never cross your path again, and you've got to let her go for fear of the police or of being thought a cad. I tell you, it's all wrong. What I want is the chance for a man to stand or fall on his own merits, demerits and luck."

"In other words," I said, "you mourn the impossibility of your girl being set upon at the next corner by bravoos in the hire of some hated suitor who wants only her estate, and the chance for you to whip out your rapier, whisk her behind you against the wall, pink half a dozen of her assailants, and become, at once, the glad recipient of her love and hand."

"You're a scoffer," laughed Dalton.

"But isn't that it?" I persisted.

"Merely a manifestation of it, put persiflageously. It's the underlying possibilities I'm talking about. Sorry I've got to leave you Philistines; I'm due in Brooklyn in an hour."

"Expect to find any romance there?" queried Randall.

"As much as anywhere. I haven't lost hope. We can hope, you know, even when we're perfectly sure there's nothing in it. That's a bit of illogical

asininity for which, at least, we can thank a beneficent Providence."

"Fool!" remarked Randall affectionately, when Dalton had gone, and I nodded, smiling, knowing that the comment implied no reproach. The rest of the story came to us later—from several sources.

Dalton strolled casually down the street to the subway station, got his train, and changed at Fourteenth Street to a moderately full Brooklyn express, where he dropped into one of the cross seats. Nothing worth lingering over in such incidents. A girl sat opposite him, and his eyes wandered about the car and came back to her. Then he realized that she was pretty. No, she was more than pretty. There was the soul in her face that makes a pretty woman what we call beautiful, and Dalton, while he avoided anything in the nature of annoying scrutiny, began to speculate. He does not claim that he fell in love with her then and there, which would have been distinctly romantic, but that she stood out clearly in his mind against the background of woefully commonplace humanity strung along the side seats. He couldn't quite place her. Perhaps she was twenty-five years old, but her face had a serious cast that seemed to him to indicate a woman who had had problems and stood up to them. At the same time, there was none of the alert restlessness about her that so often grades into self-centered hardness in the faces of many "business women"—the expression that comes from the struggle and competition out in the open, that he was old-fashioned enough to believe women were never meant to meet.

He noticed that she had opened her handbag; then that she was turning over its contents rather anxiously, as if something were missing. A moment later he saw a card at her feet, and picked it up and restored it to her. Her "Thank you" was pretty and softly spoken, and the sudden relief in her eyes pleased him still more. Then they relapsed, naturally, into the stony unconsciousness of each other's existence that modern breeding prescribes. He had helped her a little bit, though, and he was con-

scious of an absurd thrill at the realization.

The train swung out from Bowling Green station, and, a moment later, the reverberations of the East River tube drowned even thought. What happened then was more like a crazy nightmare than a series of events in well ordered modern life.

Dalton's eyes happened to fall again to the floor of the car—to the spot where the card had lain—and his brows drew together in amazement. There was no doubt about it whatever. *The spot was covered with water.* A thin film of it, brown and muddy, was spreading slowly from the fore end of the car. The soles of his feet were wet.

At the same moment he heard two or three exclamations of surprise and annoyance. "Rotten public service!" "Couldn't a greedy corporation run cars under the river without wetting people's feet?"

Dalton's senses bounded upward at a subconscious realization of something new and strange that was impending, and it affected him as with a sort of exaltation, very like what he had experienced once on the top of a mountain, when a thunder storm had played, not only above, but below and around him. He almost found himself laughing outright at an absurd mind picture of the Israelites in the Red Sea grumbling characteristically at the Lord because the walls of water leaked a bit and made the road muddy. Funny if, after all, this particular bunch should turn out to be Egyptians instead of Israelites; and, at the same time, he realized vaguely, as the rest did not seem to, that what they were face to face with was big and serious. The train stopped with a jerk.

Only a second, though, and then, as if the motorman had thrown on every volt or ampere or whatever it is of his power, they leaped forward with a speed that almost threw him from his seat.

With the sudden clearness of mental vision that comes at moments of great emergency to some people, Dalton saw, as in a flash, the mind of that motorman and, through it, the situation. Only one thing could cover the floor of the car with

water. There was a break in the tube somewhere, and the river was slowly filling it—how rapidly no one could know, save by the outcome. Naturally the lowest portion of the tube would fill first. Whether that was in midstream or not he did not know, and he wondered if the other man did. He estimated that they must be somewhere near the middle now. Evidently the motorman's momentary stop had meant hesitation whether to go forward or to back up. Then he had realized that the latter was impossible, that it meant a probable collision with the following train, and now he was racing with the water—with death; and both were coming up very fast.

Everyone was standing now, lurching unsteadily with the wild swing of the car. Some had mounted on the seats, and the muddy flow had reached the knees of those still on the floor. Most of them were manifestly frightened but dazed as well. A new thought flashed through Dalton's mind.

He caught the girl's arm, as she stood unsteadily facing him with her hand on the back of the seat.

"Come," he said, very quietly, and, drawing her out into the passage, he pushed their way through the dumb, terrified cattle around them.

The motorman was racing with the water. If it happened to be a very close race, perhaps only the head of the train might win out. Of course, they could not run long under such conditions. It was only the sectional "supply" and the new insulated motor that kept them going at all. At any rate, nearest to the head was the safest place, if there was safety anywhere.

They were on the platform, and the muddy stream swirled about them almost to their waists. The girl had not spoken a word, and he hoped she would not. He could not stop to explain, and the noise was deafening. Perhaps they had not yet reached the lowest point. Perhaps that part of the tube was already full, and he pictured the train plunging on through a submerged section of the tunnel—wondered whether the motor would get through—whether it would get through fast enough to give

them a chance to be resuscitated. Perhaps they were already on the Brooklyn rise. If so, the break must be a big one, for the flood was still deepening.

They were out of the second car and pushing on through the third. No one else had, apparently, caught his idea. When he got to the front, if he ever did, he would call out—tell them to pass the word along; but just now the chance of safety for the girl counted for more than all the broad humanitarianism in the world.

The water was up to their chests. Men were swearing, women shrieking, and, at last, he was up against the front door of the first car, near the motorman in his little box. The man had done all he could. He was standing up, peering out ahead through the window. Then Dalton called:

"Come up front! Send the word down the train!"

It is doubtful if anyone saw the logic of the warning, but the sheep instinct was there. In a second he had cause to regret his magnanimity in the crush that surged up against them, jamming, clutching, clawing, fighting, as if to get out and pile themselves under the wheels.

He had lifted the girl onto the seat and, with one arm around her, he pressed close to the motorman's box and clung fast with his free hand to the top rail, so as not to be dragged down into the maelstrom of water and humanity. The flood was still gaining. Now it was up to the necks of those standing on the floor. The crossing time was hardly minutes, but years seemed to have passed since the train had drawn out of the Bowling Green station. Would they never reach Brooklyn? Crawling! Crawling! Of course the fast deepening of water must check their speed considerably, while, on the other hand, the force of the river pouring in behind would have a tendency to push them forward; and, amid these flying thoughts, he found time to marvel at the composure of the girl he was straining to him—half-unconsciously. She had not said a word. She had yielded implicitly to everything he had done. Now at last she spoke, and her words showed that she understood:

"Shall we get through in time?"

He swallowed the "God knows!" that rose to his lips, and answered:

"I think so. We must be nearly in."

"Because," she went on very quietly, "if we don't, I want to thank you for the care you've taken of me."

"Oh, that's all right," he said, and almost smiled at the realization of how modern he was, after all—the simon-pure seventeenth century man would have said something quite different; and then a great wave seemed to roll forward, covering the sea of heads that surged below him. Oh, the horror of it! The sudden silencing of the oaths and shrieks, the hideous sputtering, the mad clutching of hands at his clothes, at his legs, seeking blindly to draw him down!

He clung fiercely to the handrail and tried to raise the girl up beyond their reach. He saw the motorman plunge under the water, and felt sure, somehow, that the man had done it voluntarily; that, rather than lose his hold on the speed lever, he had deliberately thrown his body against it, to keep it full over; and Dalton felt how fine a thing it was—how much finer than his own. The water surged over him. Was it over her, too? That was his last thought.

A dull humming sounded in his ears; louder—louder. Was it death? But slowly the noises seemed to grow articulate with distinguishable words. Also he was conscious of feeling—feeling that, though uncomfortable, seemed to become more definite each moment; and he knew that he could open his eyes if he wished to, and closed them tighter, as if to shut out that awful pack of heads with the water rushing over it.

No, he was not there now—not in the flooded car, full of men and women struggling like rats in a submerged trap. He was in bed, and voices were about him, hands were working over him.

Someone said, very far away:

"He's all right now. He'll pull through." And someone else, even farther off:

"Thank God!"

Surely he knew the second voice, but

he could not remember when or where he had heard it before. It seemed very hard to think. Then, suddenly his mind worked back, and he half started up under the ministering hands.

"Is *she* safe?" He had tried to shout it, but he knew he had only mumbled, so he opened his eyes wide and stared about.

Yes, there she was, leaning over him, and, beside her, the face of a young man that grinned. Dalton could have struck him for the grin, but, after all, he felt very contented and sank back on the pillows.

It was later, he did not know how much later, when full consciousness returned. She was sitting by his bed and he eyed her critically.

"Go and put on dry clothes," he said.

The girl laughed out.

"I suppose I might venture to leave you now," she said reflectively, her head a little on one side, "and I'm inclined to think your orders are proper."

"Of course you can leave me," said Dalton peevishly. "It's outrageous for you to sit around in that condition."

She seemed about to answer but checked the impulse.

"Very well. I'll be back soon."

He turned over in the bed and began to put things together, shuddering at the first picture he conjured up and wondering whether it would ever leave him. He felt a yearning to get up, started to test his strength and found himself still a bit groggy but definitely "in the ring." Then he considered that the blankets were better for a man in pajamas who was liable to receive a fair caller at any minute. Just as well, after all. He heard the door open and the rustle of her skirt.

Glancing at the patient, she nodded her satisfaction and sat down by the bed. Dalton observed that she wore a nurse's costume.

"Very becoming," he remarked.

"I hope so," she said. "You see, I wear it most of the time. This belongs to a friend who is one of the nurses here. My hospital is in Manhattan."

"So you're a trained nurse?" he commented. "I thought you looked sort of competent. Rather fortunate I had you around."

"More fortunate that I had you," she replied, and then she laughed again. "Was that why you selected me to take forward?"

"Well—not exactly; but tell me about it," he went on hastily. "What happened? How many were saved? Did they save that fine motorman?"

"Yes, I believe so," she said, "but"—and her face clouded—"I fear very few of the rest. No one seems to know what caused it all. They say it was impossible, but it happened. There's talk about anarchists and dynamite, but it's too soon to tell yet. All I know is that I was fortunate enough to have a very domineering man sitting opposite me, thanks to whom, I was the only conscious one in the train when we reached Borough Hall, and when they got you out I came with you in the ambulance."

She rose hastily. "You don't need me any more now," she went on, "and there are others being brought in who—may."

"Yes, but I shall need you," and he put out a detaining hand. "I am going to need you always."

"But—but," she hesitated, and her face, that had been pale, looked very rosy, her eyes strangely tender—"you don't even know my name."

"I know what it's going to be," he said.

And that was how "The Man Who Was Born Too Late" caught up with his own times.



CHAUFFEUR—What is the fine for speeding?
CONSTABLE—Ten dollars—for men, and \$9.99 for women.

THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR

By Alan Sullivan

THE strongest friendships are those which leave something to the imagination.
Speech, like a river, bears good and bad on its current.

The fool is a fool, but he is wise when he knows it.

Solitude is the hospital of the spirit.

Pride is the grave of progress.

Great ideals are a better anchorage than great possessions.

Repentance born of emotion generally has a short life.

Some successful men are only successful accidents.

Emotion is disguised by men, loved by women and lived by children. We cannot strangle emotion without killing some other equally divine attribute.

Memory is the scourge of the trickster, but the benison of the just.

Envy is an admission of inferiority. It feeds on our lesser selves and unduly magnifies its object. Envy is spiritual suicide.

Love is the fireside of the heart.

The millennium will begin in the kitchen.

Pride of birth or station can only be rightly felt by those who accept the responsibility it involves.

We qualify our speech in direct proportion to the rank we share. Thus, among the laboring classes, candor is naked and omnipresent, but diminishes with progressive stations, till, among the upper circles, too delicately nurtured to offend, it is conversationally unwelcome. A person who is invariably truthful can never hope to attain social position.

Many a straight face hides a crooked mind.

The charm of friendship between men and women depends as much upon difference of sex as upon congeniality of temperament. No such alliance will prosper if the one ceases entirely to be a coquette and the other to be gallant.

We settle questions of honesty with others, but those of honor with ourselves. Thus honor is a finer quality than any we may adopt as a protective measure.

A DOCTOR'S DIARY

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

NOV. 1—Went out with ambulance today for the first time. Wore my white duck hospital clothes and nearly froze. Held one of the hot water bottles on my knee until I discovered it was leaking. *Memo: Get heavy underwear at once.* John rang the bell constantly and people lined up to see us pass. Pretty girl in window on Fifty-fourth Street. Found an old gentleman who had sprained his ankle. Got the wrong bottle and gave him spirits of ammonia instead of whiskey. He hopped around pretty lively and the crowd got funny. He insisted on going home, so we drove him to the house on Fifty-fourth Street where the pretty girl lives. *Memo: Shave every morning to be ready for emergency calls.*

Nov. 2—Two calls today, one for a man who fell out of a window and broke a board fence, and one for a baby that had eaten clear starch. Told his mother to damp him down and in about an hour we could get a good domestic finish. Gave John a dollar to go home by Fifty-fourth Street. Didn't see the girl. Lost time going around, and took the wheel off a milk wagon to make it up. *Memo: Strike superintendent for new uniforms—don't like these.*

Nov. 3—Old gentleman came to hospital today to complain about spirits of ammonia. I got a raking from superintendent. One call—man fell off sixty-foot bridge and broke his thumb—he was an Irishman.

Nov. 4—Called to see woman who had fainted in automobile. Query: automobilism or spasm of the imagination? Nothing else today. Thought the ambulance needed looking over, and went with John to the wagon shop. He went

by Fifty-fourth Street, and I gave him half a dollar. Girl was at window—looked away when she saw us—think she blushed. Old gentleman shook his fist from doorway. John has suggested a way to straighten things out. *Memo: Get my hair cut.*

Nov. 5—Two drunks and a hysterical shoplifter.

Nov. 6—Had a talk with superintendent. We don't want any more drunks brought in—says to take them to police station. Old gentleman is going to enter suit against hospital; says the lining of his stomach is gone. What if he is the girl's father? Gave John half a dollar. He has a new hat.

Nov. 7—Fight at Polish christening. Brought in three stabbed cases, including the baby and considerable whiskey. Horses turn down Fifty-fourth Street now without directing. Girl seems to be painting at window. She was standing today as we passed—very graceful figure. She had on a red necktie with blue dots. *Memo: Buy a red necktie with blue dots.*

Nov. 8—Superintendent objects to new necktie—not professional. Shall put it on after we start. Bad wreck on the B. E. Ambulance from St. John's beat us and got the pick. Saw a lot of people laughing at the ambulance; it must need painting. Girl at window smiled as we passed. Gave John a dollar. *Memo: Write home for money.*

Nov. 9—There is something queer about the ambulance. People stop and look wherever we go. Old gentleman offers to compromise suit against the hospital for two thousand dollars! Think I will go to see him.

Nov. 10—Have discovered what peo-

ple were laughing at. John had hoisted a red bandana handkerchief with blue dots instead of our yellow flag. Girl now wears a blue necktie. John has been ringing the gong pretty hard on Fifty-fourth Street. Complaint entered today about the noise. Brought in a baby that had swallowed a gold ring.

Memo: Keep ring until called for.

Nov. 11—Man with cork leg run over by street car, compound comminuted fracture of the cork leg. Went to see old gentleman. Very irritable. He is the girl's grandfather. Told him I gave him aromatic spirits of ammonia because I thought he had had all the whiskey he needed. Girl came in suddenly. Old gentleman somewhat confused. Winked at me to keep quiet—said yes, yes, he understood now; we could consider the incident settled. John is no fool. Suit declared off. Girl's name is Dorothy, my favorite name. She is an artist.

Memo: Give John a dollar.

Nov. 12—Man tried to cut his throat with a safety razor. Butcher's Association had a parade today. Several accidents in the mounted contingent. The horses seemed to miss the wagons behind them.

Nov. 13—Got a ham from a butcher I attended yesterday. Having no use for it, sent it to old gentleman on Fifty-fourth Street. Polite note acknowledging ham. Man tried to kill himself and got ink instead of laudanum. Says that it is his usual luck—if he stepped on a piece of glass he would break his arm.

Nov. 14—Invitation to dinner tomorrow at Fifty-fourth Street. Gave John my new striped vest, as remittance has not come.

Nov. 15—My usual luck. Here I am, sitting in the ambulance, trying to keep warm with blankets and hot water bottles, when it is time to start to dinner. Picked up man this morning with his face covered with spots. Called it chicken pox and brought him here. Superintendent called in staff who said smallpox. Started for municipal hospital; doctors there said chicken pox; place full anyhow. Back here again;

not allowed in. Nothing to eat since breakfast. Been to every hospital in town—can't get him in. Feels like snow now. Am sitting in ambulance in courtyard, while hospital board eats its dinner and wonders what to do with us. John threatens to drive into stable soon. Anything is better than this. I can smell beef tea; am starving. Man with spots says they're pimples; always has them. John says measles. Wonder when I was vaccinated? Wish I had chosen the law—lawyers don't have to ride around in the Black Maria, begging jails to take their clients in. Believe I hear the hot sausage man.

Nov. 16—Man solved question last night by slipping away while I was taking a nap. Hurry-up call from Dorothy today; cook drank the blue half of a seidlitz powder and then the white. Family found her foaming at the mouth and thought it was hydrophobia. She was puffed out like a balloon. Advised them to tie her down as she would float away—and cooks are scarce. Had my first chance to talk to Dorothy alone. She admires the medical profession and thinks I would make a great surgeon. Asked her if she meant that I was cool in emergencies. No, she meant I had plenty of nerve.

Nov. 17—Called to inquire for pneumatic cook.

Nov. 20—Great luck. The horses ran away the day before yesterday, and true to their training turned down Fifty-fourth Street. As I knew I was bound to go some time, I fell out opposite Dorothy's house and was carried in there. Am still there, suffering from an obscure pain in the head, much relieved by the pressure of a small, soft hand. John fell out at McCarty's saloon, and is still there. Says he isn't able to leave. Sent a dirty little boy here today for five dollars, on the strength of spilling me out where he did.

Nov. 21—All is over. I am the unhappiest wretch in the world. Dorothy is engaged to the druggist at the corner.

Nov. 22—She was, but she is not! No time to write now. Farewell, diary.

Memo: Look at engagement rings.

THE MAN OF HER PRAYERS

By Marie Beulah Dix

IN the Blindman's Holiday of the twenty-second day of December, year of our salvation 1644, John Meux, Lord Broxholme, sat disconsolate at the great table in his chamber of audience. The poor-harried gentleman! He was commandant, sore against his will, but to the satisfaction of his Puritan lady, of the Parliament garrison of Caworth Castle. Six weeks had he been straitly besieged, and now he scanned the articles of capitulation, that day drawn up between him and his conquerors.

Ah, well, things might be worse, he took cold comfort to himself. On the morrow, when the articles were signed, the garrison—that is, practically all the garrison—would be suffered to march away unmolested. No doubt he could explain matters handsomely to the Parliament—perhaps even to his lady wife! At least, he could comfort himself that his days in harness now were numbered. Even he had the hope that he might taste, at his own Kentish hearthside, such belated Christmas cheer as Parliament and his lady permitted to him.

Then, poor wretch, he saw his little castle of contentment crumble, for, right on the heels of the scared lackey, who should have announced him, Lieutenant Herman-Peter Killigrew strode into the chamber.

Herman-Peter's years were one and twenty. His flanks were thin, and his shoulders broad. His step was light, and his hand dwelt by custom on his sword hilt. He had the flaming bright hair and the strong, clear features of an arrogant young archangel. In addition to that, he bore on his right cheek a scar, the donor whereof had lain, since the

hour of its bestowal, under six feet of Saxon soil; and his troopers feared him as they feared the devil. That, as they were all good Puritans, is to say much!

"My lord," said Herman-Peter, in careful English, but with an accent from beyond the Rhine, "it may hap that I be ill instructed, touching one amongst the articles of our capitulation. Rumor hath it that all officers of foreign birth shall be surrendered to the victors, to deal with as them listeth."

Lord Broxholme fiddled miserably with the quill pens upon the table before him. So small it was, that clause in the ninth article, that he had been fain to forget it, if only Herman-Peter Killigrew had been of the like comfortable inclination!

"Listen, my lord!" spoke Herman-Peter, hand on hilt as ever. "In this garrison of Caworth there serveth but one officer, born beyond seas, and that he, as well you know, am I. 'Tis at me, and me only, that that *verdammter* clause is leveled. Know you wherefore? Are you fain to know why you shall deliver me to the mercy of the conquerors?"

Broxholme murmured, inarticulate, that he knew not. He might have added that he cared not. And he might have ended, with fervor, that he wished that Herman-Peter, stumbling block in the way of truce, to vex a poor commandant, had stayed beyond his native Rhine!

"Sir Humphrey Killigrew," said Herman-Peter, "is one amongst the Cavalier commanders. My father was his brother—his elder brother."

Broxholme let fall the pen from his fiddling fingers.

"Do I see whither you aim, Lieutenant?"

"Do you see whither Sir Humphrey aimeth?" Herman-Peter's voice clanged like steel. "My father—God rest him—came out of England to serve the Pfalsgrave Frederick. He wed with my mother, Franceska von Arnheim, and I was born, their sole child, in the year my father died. I have the writings to prove these my assertions true. I grew up in my mother's care. There were no men left of our house, to speak or strike for mine inheritance. But now that I am man grown I am come into England to claim mine inheritance, the manors of King's Cowley, Twyford and Little Shenstone, and the rents thereto pertaining, which mine uncle hath these many years unjustly withholden from me. I might not come to have speech with him, but I have laid suit against him in the courts of the land. The law travelth with slow foot, however, and in special in days like these, when the countryside is become a camp. Meanwhile I maintain myself with my sword, and you can judge how few tears it had cost mine uncle had a Cavalier bullet, long ere this hour, brought me low. But, failing such comfortable makepeace—"

Open hand, Herman-Peter smote the written sheet that was spread before Broxholme.

"You see, my lord," he cried, "the manner of snare that here is laid for me! 'Tis no question of a foreign born mercenary, though that lendeth color to their deed. 'Tis question of a lawful claimant, delivered helpless into the hands of the man, who, of all men, is most fain to see him dead. Mark me well! Ere I am three days a prisoner in Sir Humphrey's hold, I shall come by a quiet bullet in the brain—a mad fool, shot in attempting an escape, and no further question made. 'Tis to my death, I tell ye, that you deliver me, delivering me into Sir Humphrey's hands. My lord"—Herman-Peter's lips were stiff, and his blue eyes had the look of a man who drowns—"have you it in mind to sign to those conditions?"

Unhappy Broxholme! He had never

liked Herman-Peter, tall man of his hands though he knew him to be. He had felt that his hyphenated name savored of Popery, and he had been sure that a youth, so unnecessarily well favored, and with the devil's handicap of a singing voice to pull men's heart-strings, could not by any possibility be a farer in the strait paths of virtue of which Lady Broxholme would approve. Yet he had an uncomfortable feeling that he was expected, for Herman-Peter's undesirable sake, to defy the conquerors and stand out for different terms. Weakly angry at his question of himself, he fell to blustering.

"What, sir! Do you hold that, in a garrison of two hundred and a score of precious souls, the safety of one man shall weigh in the balance 'gainst the safety of the whole?"

Herman-Peter looked at Broxholme, with his eyes of a drowning man. Then suddenly he smiled, with stiff lips, and tossed back his bright head.

"Nay, 'twere pity that the two hundred and nineteen, and their gallant commander thereto, should fail to keep their Christmas with their wives!" he said. "Lord Broxholme, I have served ye faithfully these six months. I ask nothing now at your hands save that I be relieved of duty for the next twelve hours."

"You purpose—" stammered Broxholme, and checked himself. Better, he realized, that he should know naught of what Herman-Peter had in mind to do. But, as he saw that shining youth salute and turn away, he could not forbear to stay him.

"Lieutenant Killigrew! Are you well furnished with money for your flight? If I might stead you—"

Proud one-and-twenty smote him, with the scorn in the eyes that were past fear or pleading.

"My lord, I shall fare well, doubt nothing, without aid of yours."

But outside the commandant's house, in the bleak twilight, where the first flakes of a spitting storm were aw whirl, Herman-Peter felt the six shillings in his pockets, that were all his store, and called himself a fool for his pains. He

glanced at the lighted windows of the officers' quarters, where lay men who disesteemed him as a covert Papist (it might be!) and a soldier of fortune. He glanced toward the dark line of the soldiers' barracks, where lay the troopers, who, as aforesaid, feared him as the devil and loved him not at all. Across the bastioned walls of Caworth he glimpsed a beacon fire on a far hill top, that marked the camp where lay his enemies, and, chief of all, his private foe, who went about to compass his destruction.

Penniless well-nigh, and unfriended, in the very grasp of his mortal enemy, Herman-Peter slung his cloak across his shoulder and headed for his quarters through the whirling flakes. As he went he sang beneath his breath, in the throbbing tenor that had roused Lord Broxholme's evil surmise, and the song was, "Fortune, My Foe."

II

ONCE in his quarters, Lieutenant Herman-Peter Killigrew made ready for the journey that was thrust upon him, by laying aside his officer's scarf and his uniform of green. In their stead, he donned the meanest garments that he owned—doublet and breeches of gray kersey, over which he laced a sleeveless leathern jerkin. He changed his boots for shoes, and his helmet for a wide-brimmed hat of felt. He knew his sword to be out of keeping with his dress, but, having no thought to run the hazards of that night unarmed, he buckled the baldric across his chest, and then turned his back for good upon his Caworth quarters.

He knew full well the ugly risk that he ran in laying aside his uniform. It were indeed the last grim jest of fortune, he reflected, if he should so far play into his adversary's hands as to get himself trussed up as a spy. But to whip up his desperate resolution, had it lagged, he kept before him the picture of himself, delivered, an unarmed prisoner, into the hands of his unknown, malignant kinsman.

Under such wholesome stimulus Herman-Peter, in the next hours, performed the almost miraculous. With the storm to friend him, he let himself over the slippery walls of the castle, and, mingling with the soldiers who swarmed the streets of Caworth town, passed through the enemy's lines and gained the open country. The storm-swept dawn of December twenty-third saw Herman-Peter, somewhat haggard of countenance, in the sequel of twelve hours with Death to his playfellow, setting his face to the open wold, with Caworth Castle and its menace a good three leagues behind him.

Herman-Peter's plans were, as usual, of a divine simplicity. He was going, please heaven, straight across the Cavalier county of Wilts, to the shelter of the Puritan garrison at Malmesbury. He was hindered in this course only by his entire ignorance of the road, the blinding storm and, as the hours wore by, the ever increasing weariness of his legs and the emptiness of his stomach.

About noon, so far as he could judge, with no sun to friend him, he was thankful to espy, on the near horizon, what seemed a hut. Thither he trudged, at a quickened pace, with visions of small beer and black bread—at the very least, of a hearthfire; and then he laughed at the dashing of his hopes, as he saw that the hut of his fond imagining was no more than a strawstack.

Down sat Herman-Peter in the lee of the stack, for want of better shelter, and while he asked himself whither he next should fare, he sang, through chattering teeth, for the upkeep of his courage. The song, with grim appropriateness, was "My Lodging Is on the Cold Ground."

He was midway of the second stanza, when he could have sworn that he heard a little rustling sound hard by him in the straw. With his right hand, which through the freezing hours he had cherished in his pocket, he loosed his sword in its sheath and, thus prepared for whatever he might encounter, were it the devil or Sir Humphrey Killigrew, he rose cautiously and peered round the shoulder of the stack.

III

FROM a snug hollow, scooped in the straw, a girl looked up at Herman-Peter Killigrew, and smiled.

"I am blithe to see thee," she greeted him, in a sweet, lagging voice. "I prayed, dost thou mark? And thou art come in answer. 'Tis not our Puritan brethren alone that trust the power of prayer."

Herman-Peter looked upon her for the moment speechless. To appear in so extraordinary a place and fashion, a girl should be either mad or bad, but this girl, as he saw, was neither. She was, to look at, little more than child—scant fifteen, perhaps, in years—lithe and slender as a young boy, and with a boy's frankness in her brown eyes. The dark hair that strayed from beneath her scarlet riding hood was silken fine above her delicate brows. Her short upper lip curled back never so slightly from her white teeth, in a little smile of entire trust and friendliness. Her russet gown, he noted, was of broadcloth, and her gloves were stiff with embroidery. By dress and speech and face she was a gentlewoman. Therefore his first question was inevitable.

"I' the name o' heaven, mistress, what do you here?"

"I am going," said she, "to Great Burgoland."

"Of a truth," said Herman-Peter, "you will be long in coming thither, if your method of progress be to sit under a stack!"

"I sat me down," she retorted with dignity, "because I was a-weary and somewhat affrighted, but now that I am rested and thou art come to be my guard, we will forth upon our way."

Herman-Peter might well have been flattered by the assumption that anything so beautiful as his bright-haired self must needs be sent direct from heaven, in answer to a maiden's prayer, but he was, above all things, of a practical mind.

"Mistress," said he, "there are but two reasons to hinder me from bearing you company unto Great Burgoland. The first is, that I know not where the

devil the place may be, and the second, that I have no earthly desire to go thither."

"As to that," she answered, not one whit dismayed, "I know the road perfectly, and, since 'tis my very earnest desire to be there, thou canst not surely be so barbarous as to go thine own ways and leave me to the mercy of the wild weather."

Herman-Peter looked at her through narrowed lids. Of a truth, the child knew no better than to hold the storm her worst danger, while he, who knew what prowlers were abroad, broken men and ruffraff of both parties, could bless it as her best of friends.

"Come!" said he, and, as if she were indeed a child, held out his hand to her. "At least I'll see thee safe in the care of thy friends—and thou shouldst ne'er have left them," he ended sternly.

For a second her gloved hand lay in his, as she sprang to her feet. For long after he seemed to feel that light, swift pressure on his fingers. With her scarlet hood at the level of his chin, they set forth, side by side, across the white wold, through the whirling flakes of snow.

"Tell me," he broke silence soon, for the answer to his question indeed concerned him nearly, "who are these friends of thine to whom thou dost lead me?"

"'Tis to Great Burgoland we go," she answered him, "and that is the seat of the Viscount Walsingford."

Herman-Peter's brows were straitly furrowed. Walsingford, as he knew, was of the King's party, and Walsingford's seat could be no safe harborage for him, a Parliament's man.

"Listen!" said he. "I may not fare with thee to thy journey's end. Once let me bring thee where there are decent womenkind, and I will be gone."

"No, no!" she cried, and of a sudden her two little hands, in their embroidered gloves, were locked about Herman-Peter's arm. "There is no safety for me till I come unto Great Burgoland, and indeed, indeed, good sir, my need is very desperate!"

"What need should be upon thee, lass?" he questioned.

"Oh," said she, "my father, who indeed, la, is a monstrous cruel man, is fain to have me married and, though thou mayst not credit it, unto a villain Roundhead, a man on whom I ne'er have set mine eyes, but as old as sin, I shrewdly surmise, and ugly, no doubt, as Sathanas. My father's high command came unto us a week ago, at Stapleham manor, where I dwell the most of the year with my good Aunt Prue. Now well I knew how bootless were prayers and tears with my father, so I resolved me to flee unto my godfather, the Viscount Wal—"

"So?" said Herman-Peter.

"Oh!" said she, and clapped one hand to her red lips, though with the other she still clung to Herman-Peter's serviceable arm. "I was not minded to tell thee that, no more than I shall tell thee my name, for my father is my father, for all he hath dealt ungently with me. But being so resolved, I left Stapleham, with my nurse, whom I, poor silly soul, believed faithful unto me, but two nights ago, when we came to the inn at Broadlington, did she not feign herself too ill to travel farther, the hussy that she is! For I learned of the hostler boy—I smiled upon him, so he told me!" she explained candidly, and smiled on Herman-Peter as she did so. "I learned that the artful jade had privily despatched a messenger unto my father, to bid him come intercept me on my journey there at Broadlington. So last night, or, to speak truly, in the dark of this morn—I stole from the inn. I had no horse, but I durst not flee by the quickest way toward Great Burgoland, for they surely would track and overtake me, so I stole forth, quite at the other side of the town, to fetch a circuit round about, but, being o'ercome with weariness, I sat me down beneath yon comfortable stack of straw, and prayed for thy coming."

"'Twas a crazed prank!" said Herman-Peter, but, looking into the brown eyes beneath the scarlet hood, he smiled as he said it. "Thou mightst have starved with hunger or frozen"—he named the least of her perils—"here in this wild waste."

"Nay, I was snug and warm in the stack," she assured him, "and food I brought with me."

"Food?" said Herman-Peter, and his tone was wishful.

"Out on me now! Perchance thou art anhungered?"

"Aye, truth!" assented Herman-Peter.

"Lo!" said she. "I have yet a China orange, a Banbury cake and some raisins o' the sun."

Then, in his own despite, must Herman-Peter laugh.

"Keep them, dear heart!" said he. "I am not yet at the famishing pass. But tell me, an thou wilt, how long ere we shall reach Great Burgoland?"

She peered through the whirling flakes, and then she shook her scarlet head.

"I fear me that I know not," she answered, and in her eyes, upon the sudden, was the bewilderment of a child. "The land looketh not as I remembered, now that it lieth all in snow." To the bewilderment succeeded terror. "Out and alas, fair sir, I am all mazed, since we left yon stack. Of a truth, our way is lost."

"Why, then," began Herman-Peter—and, as he swept his glance round the white waste that circled them, he had it on his tongue to say, "We both are lost!" but instead, as he looked into the sweet eyes, that now were brimmed with tears, he ended stoutly, "We shall find the way together, my little comrade."

IV

By the time that the early dusk had fallen, on that storm-swept twenty-third of December, Herman-Peter Killigrew and his chance companion had thankfully devoured the China orange, the Banbury cake and the last of the raisins. They had walked, so she protested, at least twenty leagues, and they had not found the walking of the easiest. Part of the time, in truth, Herman-Peter had carried her lightly in his arms, with the scarlet hood and the scarlet cheeks so near his lips that he had forgotten that the way was long.

Her name was Nan, she told him. That much she held it lawful she should tell. His name, he answered her, was Herman-Peter and, misfortunate as herself in the choice of kindred, he was fleeing from an uncle, who was cheerfully minded to slit his throat. When he saw the swift compassion in her eyes, he wished that he had made out his history to be even sorrier.

Altogether they had passed the afternoon with much content, but with the coming of night the girl gave voice to fears that had begun to assail Herman-Peter, to his much discomfort.

"Good Herman-Peter," she said, "my feet are perished with cold, nor is there any longer life in mine hands. An we come not soon to shelter, be it what it may, methinks I shall weep, or swoon, or worse!"

"An thou essayest to swoon, I shall infallibly box thine ears," said Herman-Peter, but the jest came only from his lips. Of a truth, he saw their situation desperate. To lie down in the open, in that cold storm, were to court death, but to walk farther seemed no longer in the girl's power.

In this mood, where any harborage were truly welcome, they ploughed forward for perhaps another half-mile, and then, even as the girl swayed against Herman-Peter's shoulder, with a little, outworn sob, he spied through the eddying flakes a gleam of light that must betoken shelter. Thither they steered their course and, in merciful few moments, found themselves at the door of a low hut, through the ramshackle shutters of which the light was flickering.

"Praise heaven for shelter!" said Herman-Peter, for the girl was past saying aught. Without pause even to knock, he kicked open the door and bore her into the hut, and then he wondered if he had not praised heaven prematurely.

In the mean room, with its floor of trodden dirt and its smoke-stained walls, five men were gathered round a blazing fire of turf and fagots. One had a crooked back, and one bore a patch upon his eye; a third had a broken head, and the fourth was pitted deep

with smallpox; but all, save the fifth man, who mumbled in evil senility, were proper strong fellows, while Herman-Peter had to remember that, half frozen as were his hands, he might fare dubiously, either at sword play or at fist-cuffs.

For a long second both parties eyed each other. Herman-Peter read one manner of lust in the glance that dwelt on the dull silver of his sword hilt, and another manner of lust in the glance that rested on the girl at his side. He looked down at her, and in her eyes, that were no longer the eyes of a child, he saw that she was afraid, and knew whereof she was afraid.

Then up rose the man with the broken head, and a personable, tall ruffian he was.

"You are welcome, gentles," quoth he; "heartily are you welcome to the fellowship of the King's poor player folk."

In the dusk by the ingle nook, a huge bulk stirred, with a sound that was neither grunt nor growl, and two little coals of fire glimmered.

"So, la! Still thee, lad!" snarled the crook-backed man, and the coals of fire were quenched.

But Herman-Peter, better wonted now to the half-light of the room, had seen the muzzled bear that couched beyond the ingle nook, and by that token guessed his entertainers to be a bear ward and the riffraff of some player troop that the new laws of Parliament had set strolling. Instantly he had his cue, and started upon the blade-thin path that seemed the sole way of their safety.

"By this good light, well met!" cried he, and struck his hand into the hand of the broken-headed ruffian. "Comrades we are, in truth, both in our art and peradventure in our evil fortune. In me, sirs, you behold poor Kuno Hauschen, aforetime mime in chief to His Serenity, the Margrave of Ansbaden, and in this fair gentlewoman you see Richard Vane—nay, droop not thine head, good Dickory, for we be here among friends—the prettiest lad to lisp a maid's part of any that be in all England."

With curious looks, the rascals made place in their circle round the fire. Herman-Peter sat himself on an up-ended log, that served for stool, and for one second held breath, while he wondered if the girl would take her cue and play the part he had allotted her. Blessings upon the mother wit of her! She was at the hearth almost as soon as he. With a smile, half impish and half boyish, she squatted on the floor beside him and took the bread and cheese that the pockmarked man held out to her, and munched them down lustily with smacking lips.

Then Herman-Peter stretched his legs to the blaze, and, while he ate his share of food, gave himself to the joy of tall lying.

"You must know, my mates," quoth he, "that you see in us the poor remnant of the Queen's Majesty's players. We banded us together, this Christmas-tide, and were purposed to play divers merry comedies at the houses of such of the gentry in these parts as hold to the right side and the old customs, God bless 'em!"

"Marry, amen!" chimed the one-eyed man.

"'Twas yesternight," said Herman-Peter, "that we plied our craft at the house of the worshipful Sir Eustace Chiverton, of whom you all no doubt have heard. A plague on thee, Dickory! Canst not eat thy victuals manly?" He paused in his discourse to thump the girl on the back, and roundly, for she, the romp, overtaken with laughter at his glib telling, had been fain to turn the laugh into a fit of choking.

"Now," pursued Herman-Peter, "in the midmost of our comedy, when I was in a scene of wooing this fair damsel here beside me, came bursting in a band of rude mechanic knaves of the crop-eared party, who vowed that they would destroy us, children of Belial, as they named us opprobriously. Forthwith we tasted our heels, but the rest of the company had the start of us, insomuch as Dickory hath small skill to run in petticoats. We lost them in the dark and the storm, and since that hour we have wandered mazed on the wold, for

we neither of us knew the roads and, to tell truth, we are not over-fain to accost chance wayfarers, lest we be apprehended and come by a whipping or so, even as our late adversaries did threaten us."

There was a pause, in which Herman-Peter surveyed his audience with eyes of heavenly candor, and consumed a huge mouthful of bread and cheese. Then the man with the broken head thwacked him on the shoulder, and cried:

"Marry, brother, when you came in at yonder door I had held ye for gentle-folk, but I see you are of our own kind, and dog eateth not dog."

"Amen to that!" growled the one-eyed man.

"I am Will Shipley," quoth the broken-headed one, "master o' the company, to do ye service. We fared from London, to gain an honest penny, even as yourselves, amongst the loyal folk, but at Reading were we scurvily handled by the prick-eared Puritans, and our band was broken. Heaven sure hath shaped this our meeting, that we may stead each other! Hast thou a singing voice, Kuno Hauschen?"

"Aye, verily," said Herman-Peter, with indifference, for it was the first word of truth that he in the last hour had needed to utter.

"What should hinder thee then," said Shipley, "to link thy fortunes unto ours, and bring the boy with thee? Though we may not set forth a comedy, yet with jests and songs and other quaint devices we may amuse the gentry. What sayest thou, brother?"

Then, while Herman-Peter hesitated, wondering whether he ran more danger in that fierce and fickle crew to accept or to refuse, his decision was made for him.

"The first place whither we go," said Shipley, "is my lord Walsingford's fair seat of Great Burgoland."

"Aye," then said Herman-Peter, "we will thither with ye."

Then the old, evil man, who was the master, it seemed, of the poor hut where these six storm-spent folk had sheltered, mumbled that it was time to sleep, and

that yonder, in the lean-to, were trusses of straw. So Herman-Peter, though his heart smote him, shook the half-slumbering girl by the shoulder, and bade:

"Up wi' thee, little varlet! Go fetch straw to our bed."

For one second her eyes flashed, and then she had bethought herself of the part that she played. She stumbled over the front of her gown as she rose, and said, "A devil fly off wi' this pestilence fardingale!" so that she set the rascals laughing at her. Then she tugged in two trusses of straw, and heaved them down in a far corner, where she cast herself upon them and made as if she slept.

Herman-Peter lingered by the fire and heard to the end a smudged tale that the pockmarked man was telling. Then he rose and laid himself by the girl's side, but first he unbuckled his baldric, and the sheathed sword he laid between them, with his hand ready on the hilt. He had thought that perhaps she slept indeed, but presently, as the fire died down, and their rude mates fell a-snor-ing, he heard a rustling, ever so slight, and felt a little, ungloved hand that sought and found his hand upon the sword hilt. Then he laid his hand upon that hand in the dark, and so he waited for the light of morning.

V

IN the ringing cold and the bright sun of next morning, the strangely sorted company set forth across the white wold. First went the old, bleared man, who knew the ways through the snow, as vermin know them. Then strode Will Shipley and his pockmarked crony, next Herman-Peter, with the feigned Dick-ory swaggering, so far as might be, at his elbow, after them the one-eyed man and the crook-backed bear ward and, last of all, with lolling gait and little eyes that seemed to see the jest, the huge bear, Shreward.

"Listen!" said Herman-Peter softly. "Ere nightfall thou wilt be safe at Great Burgoland. In the moment when thou dost know thyself to be in safety, draw

off thy right-hand glove, as a sign unto me."

"And then?" said she.

"And then," said he, "I will be gone about mine own concerns."

She stumbled then, because she had fixed her startled eyes upon him, and he, for the ears of those about them, must mock at her clumsiness and see her scramble to her feet unhelped. She railed back at him, with a young boy's waspishness, but she kept still that startled look, deep in her eyes.

Later, in the afternoon, that had faded to gray, she in her turn spoke softly:

"And when thou goest about thine own concerns, shall I never see thee more?"

"Never—and better so!" he answered her.

"Why better?" said she, so low that he could scarcely guess the words.

"I know not thy name," he spoke gravely, "nor dost thou know mine."

"Thou art Herman-Peter," she flashed up at him. "I shall not forget."

"And when thou comest unto Great Burgoland," he went on, unheeding, "thou must devise what tale may be best for thy godfather's hearing. Say that thou didst encounter us this day upon the road—nay, this same hour."

She looked down, and the hue of her cheeks matched the scarlet of her hood.

"I shall do thy discreet bidding, fair sir," she said, and a moment later, when Herman-Peter put out a hand to help her, she drew herself from his touch. "Bethink thee of the part I play," she bade, and swaggered in her gait more than ever, and presently, when Shipley hailed her and would have her walk with him, she found no shift to stay at Herman-Peter's side.

Then Herman-Peter sucked his lip between his teeth and thought, "A plague upon the little hoiden!" but, in the same breath, he told himself that there was now no leaving her indeed until he saw her safe within the precincts of Great Burgoland, though, to see that sight, he must venture himself where he was little eager to go.

So little eager was he indeed to ven-

ture within the stronghold of the Royalist viscount that he found himself almost wishing that he might see the girl slip off her right-hand glove. But, in the very thought, he found himself rejoicing that he had not given her to know how much it stood him upon to steer his distance from Great Burgoland, for now he knew that she could think of her own safety, and of his not a jot, and when he saw her give the signal, he could hold himself indeed as free to go.

But they were trudging down the Great Burgoland street, in the drooping twilight, where village folk came shouting to marvel at the hugeous Sheward, and still the girl chatted, boyishwise, with Shipley, and her gloved hands were swinging at her sides. They were passing through the crumpled gateway of a park, and now the village folk that tailed behind them were like to mark it should a man seek to straggle from the strollers' company, and still those clenched small hands were gloved.

Then Herman-Peter set his teeth, and thought, "I will e'en play this game to the bitter end. My word is my word, even if she have forgot me!" and, so thinking, he found himself passing through a huge archway, into the outer courtyard of the manor house of Great Burgoland, where he saw torches flicker in the pale dusk, and many men astir. Some were lackeys and stable lads, but others were the undoubted scarlet of the King's troopers. Great Burgoland had clearly, in the changes of the times, become a Royalist garrison, and, in that realization, Herman-Peter breathed a shade more quickly, though he was confident that, even now, he could bring himself out of this promising gin.

In the little moment of confusion, while folk came thronging to look upon the lumbering bear and to hear Will Shipley's glib salutation, Herman-Peter saw the girl spring toward a broad, comely wench, at gaze upon the threshold of the porter's lodge, and cast herself, kissing, into her ample arms.

"Well sped for a young one, Dickory!" cried the pockmarked man.

She turned herself, under the torchlight, and for one fleet second sought

Herman-Peter with her eyes. Then she had stripped off her right-hand glove, and in the action slipped away into the shadows of the porter's lodge.

But at that moment there was no going forth for Herman-Peter. One of Shipley's train, jostled and pressed upon by the eager serving folk and the idle troopers, he found himself at length in a great barn, that now was serving its turn as a court of guard. In the sudden silence that fell upon the out-shutting of the rabble at their heels, Herman-Peter found that he and his strolling mates were fronted with a handful of troopers and a quick-spoken corporal.

"Take it not amiss, friends," quoth the corporal, in hail-fellow manner. "These be troublous times, when it behooveth us to know what guests come late to Lord Walsingford's seat. Strolling players, be you?" His eye ranged over Shipley, with his civil leer, and the pockmarked man, who cringed, and the one-eyed man, who slouched, and rested upon Herman-Peter, who stood with covered head and hand on hilt. "That's a good sword," spoke the corporal, "for a mountebank to bear."

"A good sword several ere now have found it, to their sorrow," said Herman-Peter, unruffled.

"Thou art a player, fellow?" frowned the corporal.

"A player, aye," said Herman-Peter.

"Thou lookest a soldier."

"'Tis a part," said Herman-Peter, "that I ofttimes play."

The corporal shrugged, and turned upon his heel, but he spoke to his men, loud for all to hear:

"Keep you good watch, and, till you have my word, let no man of these rogues forth of this place."

The other strolling knaves reflected the blank look of Herman-Peter, but Will Shipley came beaming into their midst and drew them round him close.

"Brothers," said he, "we shall have noble audience this night, for I have it from an honest serving lad that great company is here, not only my Lord Walsingford himself, but other gentlemen, come hither from the new raised siege of Caworth, as namely, Sir Francis

Paulet, the Viscount Dungarvon and the worshipful Sir Humphrey Killigrew."

VI

For three hours, at least, that seemed threescore, Herman-Peter waited on the pleasure of his ill chosen entertainers in that chill barn. By times he talked with Shipley and his mates, and by times he told tall stories to the lounging troopers. He dared not lapse into the silence that would have liked him best. But while he talked he found his thoughts were busy, and less, he was amazed to find, with Sir Humphrey Killigrew and all that his presence at Great Burgoland might entail, than with the little maid called Nan, who had flitted from his side for all time, as he had said were best, and with a hurt of his clumsy bestowal, that, in remembrance, he felt as his own hurt.

Then the brisk corporal came again among them, and said that the bright-haired rogue was to come into the great hall and sing for the gentlefolk, while the others should to the outer court, there to pleasure the baser sort.

For one second Herman-Peter was minded to draw sword then and there, and seek to cut a way out of the place where he should never have come, but while he hesitated, with his hand upon his hilt, he bethought him that he ran a desperate hazard, either way, and that in the hall, to balance 'gainst the danger, he might have a glimpse of little Nan—one brief glimpse more—and haply read in her eyes that he was forgiven. So he cocked his hat, and said:

"Have with thee, Corporal!"

Next moment he was striding across the court, and, above the mirk of the torches, he saw the stars overhead, keen and frosty, right stars of Christmas Eve. Then he had followed his guide through passageways and serving rooms, where the savor of cooking was heavy, and he had followed through an arched doorway, behind a tall, carven screen, and he found himself, on the sudden, in another world, leagues away from the iron walls of Caworth and the bleak

wold and the sordid hut of yesternight. He was aware of light that dazzled round him—light from scores of waxen candles, set on the long table or in sconces 'gainst the wall, light from the huge fireplaces that roared at either end of the room, light reflected from the panels of the mellow wainscot and the goblets on the table and the jewels at the white throats and in the curled locks of beauteous women.

Herman-Peter swept off his hat.

"God save ye, gentlefolk!" said he stoutly, but with a heart that misgave him, for he saw seated at that board men whom, in spite of their present mood of holiday, he knew too well for soldiers.

Then a proper man in a satin doublet, broad and comely, with a humorous eye, who should be Viscount Walsingford, turned him in his place at the head of the table and scanned Herman-Peter from his shining head to his run-down shoes.

"Thou canst sing, good fellow?" said he.

"At need, my lord!" Herman-Peter made answer, and, on the other's sign, struck into a carol.

"God rest ye, merry gentlemen," sang Herman-Peter, with his hand upon his hilt, and as he sang he swept the company with his level glance. He saw fair women a-plenty, but never a one that, however now disguised, could by any chance have been his little comrade of the storm. Then he knew that he had ventured this last hazard for naught, and, in that knowledge, he sang like a seraph.

Again he swept his glance round the circle of faces that were bent upon him. This time he was scarcely aware of the women, but he scanned the men—the tired, gray soldier at Walsingford's right hand, and the brutal, handsome rogue upon his left, and the lithe red fox that whispered in a woman's ear. He wondered which were Sir Humphrey Killigrew and, while he wondered, he heard his own voice ringing, blithe and true, in words of peace and fair good will.

Yet a third time he let his eyes range round the board, and he sensed that

of the men who watched him, some, no doubt, were known to him as officers who had served at Caworth siege, and peradventure he was known to them.

"I shall die," thought Herman-Peter, "as many a pretty fellow hath died afore me, for the sake of two brown eyes under a scarlet hood—eyes that I am not to see again!"

On the sudden he felt the drollery of it all so keenly that he was near to laughing and marring the song, but he bethought him and held out till the end. Then, while he heard the rustle of stiff brocades and soft clapping of hands, he turned to my lord Walsingford with a smile graven, a trifle stonily, upon his lips.

My lord Walsingford smiled back at him, as a man who loves a jest.

"Well sung," quoth he, "Lieutenant Killigrew!"

And though Herman-Peter had sensed that this would come, he felt it like a blow, and he knew that for one second he blenched visibly beneath it.

"In requital of thy singing," went on Lord Walsingford, "I'll give thee a piece of good counsel, as namely: next time thou art minded to range the countryside in other habit than thine own, let thy first care be to stick that head of thine into a dye pot."

Then, for a hot second, Herman-Peter's face flamed brighter than his hair, for he realized that he had been something too nearly akin to that simple fowl, the ostrich. But he spoke composedly, though the heart was hammering against his leathern jerkin:

"My lord, had I had more time at my dispose when I forswore your hospitality at Caworth, the matter had been straitly looked to, I assure ye."

Then some at table laughed, as if this were a play, and my lord Walsingford said pleasantly:

"Wilt sing for us again, Lieutenant Killigrew?"

But, spite of the silken tone of this, his host, Herman-Peter thought well to cast a swift glance across his shoulder, and then he saw that the corporal and two of his men stood alert and ready for him. For one second he was minded to

fight, but he felt it were pity to spoil this Christmas comedy with the coarseness of blood-letting. With a steady hand he unbuckled his sword, and he strode to the high seat, and laid it gravely on the table before Lord Walsingford. He heard a squeak of dismay or so from the gentlewomen, and he sensed that several of the gentlemen had half risen in their places to see better, as if it were the ending of a play. He faced them blithely, though his left hand, wanting the sword hilt, made an uncertain movement at his side.

"Nay, my lord," said he, "I've sung my last, to pleasure ye, and, if I have sung well, as you made me compliment, I ask a boon, a small one in sooth."

"What wouldst thou, Killigrew?" said Walsingford, as jocund, Herman-Peter realized, as any sleek cat with paw on mouse.

For the last time Herman-Peter swept the circle of his audience with his eyes, and he ceased to smile.

"My lord," his voice clanged, "give me to know the man that is my headsmen. Tell me which of ye all is Humphrey Killigrew!"

"'Tis thine own blame, good sir," Lord Walsingford made civil answer, "that thou hast not met with thy kinsman long since. An thou hadst yielded thyself prisoner at Caworth, like a reasonable being, thou hadst spared thyself and thy betters much needless trouble. As it standeth now—" He signed to the corporal and his men. "Take him to Sir Humphrey Killigrew!" he bade, and to Herman-Peter he said, very courteously: "I warn thee fairly, sir, that for this thy ranging about in disguise I shall have thee hanged for a spy with the day-break—"

"So had I judged, my lord," said Herman-Peter.

"Unless," concluded Walsingford, "thy kinsman be pleased to stand thine intercessor."

"My kinsman?" quoth Herman-Peter, and laughed outright. "God save ye, gentlemen," he said blithely, as he clapped on his hat; and to himself he added, "And God this hour save me!"

VII

THEY had come by winding stairs and along dim corridors, where Herman-Peter must think with bitter regret of the sword that, in what he held now to have been bravado, he had laid down amidst the cates and flagons of Lord Walsingford's table. They halted, at last, outside a half-open door, through which the red of firelight glinted.

"Come your ways in," spoke a voice, that was a voice of authority, and Herman-Peter, with bright head erect but a quick pulse throbbing in his scarred cheek, followed his guards into Sir Humphrey's presence.

But inside the door Herman-Peter halted short, for, of all the sights that he had expected, this he had least looked to see.

Opposite the door, with footboard toward the hearth, stood a great curtained bed, and at its head a little table, on which were lighted candles. On the bed, propped with pillows, lay a man of fifty, whose flaming hair was strewn with ashes, and whose wan and heavily lined face was the face of a fallen archangel. He turned his deep eyes upon Herman-Peter for a long moment, and then he said to the corporal, in the voice, albeit weak, of a man who commands without question:

"Wait ye without! Aye, you may leave him with me. I will be surety for this my kinsman."

When the door had closed upon the guards, the man upon the bed spoke again:

"Sit thee down! Nay, here in the light." There came a flicker of a smile to his wan lips. "'Truth, I have waited long enough to see thee!"

So Herman-Peter thrust a stool into the circle of light by the head of the bed, and sat him down within arm's reach of his kinsman. For a time they looked each upon the other, and in Sir Humphrey's eyes Herman-Peter saw curiosity and a shadow of amusement and, inasmuch as on that luckless night he had already made too many to be merry at his cost, he felt his pride to be rasped and raw, and he could put no name to

whatever else might lurk in the shadowed eyes that sought his, since he held that it could not be kindness.

"Thou hast thy father's look," Sir Humphrey said suddenly.

"'Tis the sole heritage," quoth Herman-Peter pointedly, "that I have had of him."

"No woman," said Sir Humphrey, "need grudge to name thee husband."

"No woman," answered Herman-Peter somewhat drily, "is like now to have that opportunity."

"Mine agents in London," went on Sir Humphrey, "have looked upon thy papers. They assure me that thy proofs will stand in any court of law."

"Else," said the rasped and angry Herman-Peter, "you had scarce put yourself to such pains to speak with me—under such auspices." Never so slightly his left hand indicated where his sword hilt should have swung.

The wan eyes of the man upon the bed held Herman-Peter's eyes.

"Kinsman," quoth Sir Humphrey, "perchance thou hast not marked what hand hath set its seal upon my face."

"Aye," said Herman-Peter, "but, by all signs that I read, you are like to outlive me." Yet as he said it he felt the hot flush mount into his cheeks, and in his own despite he lowered his voice.

"The leeches," tranquilly went on Sir Humphrey, "allot me three months of life. Fools! Three weeks—nay, three days—were nearer the mark. The old wound in my side was opened in the chills of Caworth leaguer, and the wound in my heart, since Marston, hath never closed."

The lined face amongst the pillows was weary, so that Herman-Peter might have felt his own young strength a flaunting insult.

"Mine only son," pursued Sir Humphrey Killigrew, "was slain at Marston. I have none left me but my sole daughter, Anastasia, and these be perilous times for a maid unfended. Dost thou know, perchance, our cousin, Giles Killigrew? 'Tis a mean churl, yet is he heir to King's Cowley and Twyford and Little Shenstone, failing male issue in our line."

He paused, and Herman - Peter watched him warily, and knew not what to read in the eyes that searched him.

"Herman-Peter, my brother's son," Sir Humphrey spoke, "haply I had not dealt with thee thus a year ago, but now I am a-dying, whatever the leeches say, and my son is taken from me, and I leave my daughter fenceless, and the lands of Killigrew to a churl that is my loathing."

"Well?" Herman-Peter's tone was a challenge.

"Thou hast fought on the side that, in the end, will be the winning side," Sir Humphrey seemed to muse aloud. "Nay, I am not sand blind, like the fools carousing in the hall below. The Parliament will seat thee, unquestioned, in the three manors of Killigrew that were thy father's, and"—the man's eyes besought—"I would see my daughter seated at thy side."

But Herman-Peter, with the recollection of how featly he had played the fool for the pleasuring of Walsingford and his friends, had grown each moment angrier against all creatures within the walls of Great Burgoland. So he sat now unmoved, with clenched hand heavy on the table at his side.

"And why," said he, "could you not have made me this fair proffer while I was free man and unconstrained?"

"For that I was not wizard to read thy thought and foreknow thine answer," Sir Humphrey made reply. "And be assured that no rank rebel, with the right to boast that he refused my tender of my daughter, shall go alive to make that boast."

"Do I take you, then?" said Herman-Peter, with narrowed lids. "'Tis either marry your daughter out of hand, that her children may be secure of the heritage of Killigrew, or—"

"Good, my nephew," Sir Humphrey answered wearily, "thou shouldst have thought well upon the troublesome alternative ere thou camest walking disguised into a stronghold of the King."

"You framed this device long since," said Herman-Peter, and the pulse in his scarred cheek throbbed madly, "even at the siege of Caworth?"

"Aye, of a truth," Sir Humphrey answered him. "And thou hast played into my hand right skillfully."

Again there was pause in the chamber, which Herman-Peter must strive to remember was a sick room.

"Well?" Sir Humphrey questioned. "What sayest thou, nephew?"

"Sir," Herman-Peter answered, "this night I have made mirth enough for the gentlemen of your party. You might, for our name's sake, have forbore to mock me further."

"Thou dost despise mine offer?"

"Even had I faith," said Herman-Peter bluntly, "in thine offer, or in thee, I am not minded to be given into my wife's arms with a noose round my neck, that she may cast that fact into my teeth hereafter, and haply tell the shabby tale unto my children. Now, sir, an you will suffer me be gone, I am fain to rest, against what shall come unto me with the day."

Without further parley, the wan Sir Humphrey smote the bell upon the table at his elbow. Herman-Peter rose, as he saw the corporal and his guard come again into the chamber.

"Keep him in close ward," spoke Sir Humphrey to the corporal, and, to Herman-Peter, he said: "Well, go thy ways for a long good night! Thou art very like thy father."

"For that," said Herman-Peter, "I thank ye heartily."

"And he," Sir Humphrey made serene conclusion, "was a fool entire."

VIII

It was a little chamber to which they led Herman-Peter, high up in the roof of the ancient manor house. The walls were hung with dusty arras, and through the slits of windows shone the Christmas stars.

When the stout door was locked upon him, Herman-Peter laid him down upon the pallet that stood in one corner, and was minded to go over in his thoughts the events that, in the last hours, had thronged upon him, and to fit him for the dire need that the dawn was sure to

bring, but, having watched now these two nights, he found his eyelids leaden heavy, and before he knew it he slept. In his dream he seemed to feel a girl's hand rest on his, and he saw neither the wan smile of Sir Humphrey Killigrew, nor the bright faces of menace at Lord Walsingford's table, but two brown eyes beneath a hood of scarlet—eyes that he knew he should not see again.

Then his dream was heavenly, for he dreamed that a sweet, lagging voice had spoken his name.

"Herman-Peter! Here am I come to bring thee Christmas greeting."

He was awake, he knew, for he saw clear sunlight falling round him where he sat upon his pallet, but still the dream was with him, for before him stood—a figure, surely, from the dream—his little Nan of the white wold, with a sprig of scarlet holly at her bosom and the scarlet of the holly in her cheeks. In her hands she held out his sword, that had aforetime lain between them, and he rose and caught her two hands where they rested on the sword.

"Thou art come?" he blundered, still in the maze of dreams.

"I am come," she said, "to set thee free—if thou wilt have thy freedom at mine hands."

"True comrade!" he spoke. "I should have known thou wouldst. Dear little Dickory! Thou hast forgiven what I spoke amiss to hurt thee, sweet?"

Sudden her brown eyes brimmed with tears.

"Thou wouldst never hurt me, Herman-Peter?" she whispered.

"I had liefer die the death that I shall not die now," he answered, "thanks to thee!" He slipped his sword into the baldric, and laid his hand upon the hilt.

"They would have hanged thee, truly?" she questioned.

"Aye," he answered, "for that I was no more minded to wed with a prancing Royalist jade, of the unlovely name of Anastasia, than thou wert minded to wed with a Roundhead rascal, 'as old as sin, and as ugly, no doubt, as Sathanas.'"

Suddenly she smiled, and he marveled that he had not marked before the dim-

ples in her cheeks that were love's lurking place. Demurely she cast down her eyes, but she laid the slender fingers of one hand upon his sword hilt, so close she stood, as if she, too, at need would draw courage from the touch.

"Herman-Peter," she said, "in the last hour, though surely 'twas 'gainst thy discreet counsel, have I told all that happened me 'twixt Broadlington and Great Burgoland—all have I told unto my godfather and mine own father, for I could not bear it that untruth should be amongst us on this Christmas morn."

Before the candor of her sweet brown eyes, Herman-Peter was fain to let his own gaze fall.

"Why, haply 'twas well done," he said, "since 'twas thy doing."

"Why, well, in truth, for both of us," she said, "for in this hour am I come to know my father as a wise man and a kindly, and indeed, la, he is my father, to whom I owe obedience in all things; and so," she cried suddenly, as she darted from his side, "and so dost thou owe him obedience, Herman-Peter Killigrew."

At his name upon her tongue, it seemed to Herman-Peter that more than the light of Christmas morn was breaking round him. In three strides he reached her, ere she could gain the door, and caught her two hands fast.

"Tell me thy name!" he bade, and he felt his soul hang on her answer.

"Couldst thou not guess?" she teased. "All men do call me Nan, but I was christened Anastasia Killigrew, Sir Humphrey's dau—"

The rest was lost against his lips that found hers.

"But art thou willing," he spoke presently, "to take me thus, with a halter round my throat?"

"Aye," she answered promptly, "with twenty halters!"

"Little lass," he said, and his voice was tender, "thou knowest me not."

"Aye, well I know thee, Herman-Peter, and made my father to know thee," she answered, "I that was a child when thou camest in answer to my prayer, and am now maid grown because of thy dear coming."

"Sweetheart!" he said, and now he held her two hands at his lips. "As I shall deal with thee, God deal with me!"

Through the sunlit air came faintly the sound of bells in the church of Great Burgoland.

"Hark!" said Herman-Peter. "It ringeth like a wedding peal!"

"Nay," she answered, "'tis the Christmas bells."

Then Herman-Peter's face flamed hot, remembering a certain Christmas carol

and other passages of yestereve that, in the light of morning, he found still less unto his credit.

"Dear lass," he said—and, for him, he spoke quite humbly—"shall we go unto thy father? Thanks from my heart I owe him for this hour's blest gift, and something of amendment thereto."

"Aye, come!" she said, and her two hands clasped his close against her heart. "And peace be with us all upon this Christmas morn."



THIS WHITE DECEMBER MORNING

By Gordon Johnstone

'TIS softly wakes the silver world this white December morning,
 And eerie pipes the werewind on the hills and rocky shore;
 And who would play the housecat or the cringing leash hound fawning
 Before a hearth o' flaming coals when winter's at the door?
 Rise up and take a run with her,
 A bit o' sparkling fun with her;
 And when the romp is done with her
 You'll beg the lass for more.

The birches wave from far brave heights a greeting bright and cheery,
 The maples hide their sable limbs 'neath tufts o' tasseled fleece;
 And there's a whitethroat trilling clear where lately wooed the veery,
 And there's the answer winging back from roaming winter geese;
 But climb the rugged crests o' her,
 You'll find forsaken nests o' her;
 Upon the chaste high breasts o' her,
 Dream o' a lilting peace.

'Tis sweetly sways the larches, oh, this white December morning,
 But sweeter than caressing winds is she my fond heart knows,
 With eyes like dream skies drifting that the mirror sea's adorning,
 And cheeks as soft and blushing as the shy unfolding rose;
 And o'er the braes I'll trip to her,
 O'er feathery dune and dip to her,
 Till, lip on yearning lip o' her,
 I rest where heaven blows.

CHRISTMAS EVE

By Florence Wilkinson

*R*UN, nameless Thing, unendingly, with neither goal nor track;
Run, shuddering like a tyrant's prey, our snakes across thy back.

I fear ye, Furies; let me lie, a great king who has died,
Pale and magnificent, to overawe, in purple pride.

Nay, Thing, that is not thou; it neither knows nor feels.
Run, naked Thing, into the night, our hounds upon thy heels.

Who is he that goeth by like a spark blown from a fire?
Hush, trouble us not with questions, Thing, for our task is dire.

What is that glow like an aureole that rides on the black, black wind?
We are deaf and blind, and we have no mind but to scourge the soul that has sinned.

Ah, hither it flies and thither it flies like a seed in the storm's convoy;
Yet it knows its path. Erinnyes, I pray, to follow this globe of joy!

*Nor a wind-blown seed nor a flame am I,
But a voyaging unborn soul,
Frail as a breath on glass, but ah,
I will buffet the night, to my goal.*

Ye relentless Erinnyes, my bodied sins, ye may strangle my speech if ye can,
But I'll have my say on my passing day with this soul of an unborn man.

*Little one, darling one, bird of the border,
Waif of some realm divine,
Whither and why, so valiant and sweet?
Didst thou want for bread or for wine?*

*Who art thou, creature, naked and gray,
With blood on thy outstretched hands?
The End of an old, old wicked man,
Who was king over many lands.*

*Now fear to go further, brave little flame,
Transparence lovely as dew,
For temptations are many and tears are many
And happiness comes to few.*

*Thou soul of an old, old wicked man,
Beating upward, dragged to hell,
Lo, the soul of Christ must be born as a babe.
Peace unto thee! Farewell!*

I know not the language the little one spake, yet there flowed from his heart to
my own

The beam of a terrible shining road, a road I must mount alone,
I, the soul of an old, old wicked man, in whose eyes a babe has smiled.
Erinnyes, Erinnyes, Erinnyes, avaunt! I am saved by the unborn Child.

WOMAN AS A SUPERNATURAL BEING

By Richard Le Gallienne

THE boy's first hushed enchantment, blent with a sort of religious awe, as in his earliest love affair he awakens to the delicious mystery we call woman, a being half fairy and half flower, made out of moonlight and water lilies, of elfin music and thrilling fragrance, of divine whiteness and softness and rustle as of dewy rose gardens, a being of unearthly eyes and terribly sweet marvel of hair; such, too, through life, and through the ages, however confused or overlaid by use and wont, is man's perpetual attitude of astonishment before the apparition woman.

Though she may work at his side, the comrade of his sublunary occupations, he never, deep down, thinks of her as quite real. Though his wife, she remains an apparition, a being of another element, an Undine. She is never quite credible, never quite loses that first nimbus of the supernatural.

This is true not merely for poets; it is true for all men, though, of course, all men may not be conscious of its truth, or realize the truth in just this way. Poets, being endowed with exceptional sensitiveness of feeling and expression, say the wonderful thing in the wonderful way, bring to it words more nearly adequate than others can bring; but it is an error to suppose that any beauty of expression can exaggerate, can indeed more than suggest, the beauty of its truth. Woman is all that poets have said of her, and all that poets can never say:

Always incredible hath seemed the rose,
And inconceivable the nightingale—

and the poet's adoration of her is but the articulate voice of man's love since the beginning, a love which is as mysterious as she herself is a mystery.

However some may try to analyze man's love for woman, to explain it, or explain it away, belittle it, nay, even resent and befoul it, it remains an unaccountable phenomenon, a "mystery we make darker with a name." Biology, cynically pointing at certain of its processes, makes the miracle rather more miraculous than otherwise. Musical instruments are no explanation of music. "Is it not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bod-ies?" says Benedick, in "Much Ado About Nothing," commenting on Balthazar's music. But they do, for all that, though no one considers sheep's gut the explanation. To cry "sex" and to talk of nature's mad preoccupation with his species throws no light on the matter, and robs it of no whit of its magic. The rainbow remains a rainbow, for all the sciences. And woman, with or without the suffrage, stenographer or princess, is of the rainbow. She is beauty made flesh and dwelling amongst us, and whatever the meaning and message of beauty may be, such is the meaning of woman on the earth—her meaning, at all events, for men. That is, she is the embodiment, more than any other creature, of that divine something, whatever it may be, behind matter, that spiritual element out of which all proceeds, and which mysteriously gives its solemn, lovely and tragic significance to our mortal day.

If you tell some women this of them—

selves, they will smile at you. Men are such children. They are so simple. Dear innocents, how easily they are fooled! A little make-up, a touch of rouge, a dash of henna—and you are an angel. Some women seem really to think this; for, naturally, they know nothing of their own mystery, and imagine that it resides in a few feminine tricks, the superficial cleverness with which some of them know how to make the most of the strange something about them which they understand even less than men understand it.

Other women indeed resent man's religious attitude toward them as sentimental, old-fashioned. They prefer to be regarded merely as fellow men. To show consciousness of their sex is to risk offense, and to busy one's eyes with their magnificent hair instead of the magnificent brains beneath it is to insult them. Yet when, in that old court of law, Phryne bared her bosom as her complete case for the defense, she proved herself a greater lawyer than will ever be made by law examinations and bachelor's degrees, and even when women become judges of the Supreme Court, a development easily within sight, they will still retain the greater importance of being merely women; yes, and one can easily imagine some future woman President of the United States, for all the acknowledged brilliancy of her administration, being esteemed even more for her superb figure.

It is no use. Woman, if she would, "cannot shake off the god." She must make up her mind, whatever other distinctions she may achieve, to her inalienable distinction of being woman; nothing she can do will change man's eternal attitude toward her, as a being made to be worshiped and to be loved, a being of beauty and mystery, as strange and as lovely as the moon, the goddess and the mother of lunatics. What a wonderful destiny is hers! In addition to being the first of human beings, all that a man can be, to be so much else as well; to be, so to say, the president of a railroad and yet a priestess of nature's mysteries; a stenographer at so many dollars a week and yet

a nymph of the forest pools—woman, "and yet a spirit still." Not without meaning has myth endowed woman with the power of metamorphosis, to change at will like the maidens in the legend into wild white swans, or like Syrinx, fleeing from the too ardent pursuit of Pan, into a flowering reed, or like Lamia, into a jeweled serpent—

Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd;
And full of silver moons.

Modern conditions are still more favorable than antique story for the exhibition of this protean quality of woman, providing her with opportunities of still more startling contrasts of transformation. Will it not be a wonderful sight in that near future to watch that woman judge of the Supreme Court, in the midst of some learned tangle of interstate argument, turn aside for a moment, in response to a plaintive cry, and, unfastening her bodice, give the little clamorer the silver solace it demands! What a hush will fall upon the assembled court! To think of such a genius for jurisprudence, such a legal brain, working in harmony—with such a bosom! So august a pillar of the law, yet so divine a mother.

As it is, how piquant the contrast between woman inside and outside her office hours! As you take her out to dinner, and watch her there seated before you, a perfumed radiance, a dewy dazzling vision, an evening star swathed in gauzy convolutions of silk and lace—can it be the same creature who an hour or two ago sat primly with notebook and pencil at your desk side, and took down your specification for fireproofing that new steel-constructed building on Broadway? You, except for your evening clothes, are not changed; but she—well, your clients couldn't possibly recognize her. As with Browning's lover, you are on the other side of the moon, "side unseen" of office boy or of subway throng; you are in the presence of those "silent silver lights and darks undreamed of" by the gross members of your board of directors. By day—but ah, at evening under the electric lights, to the delicate strains of the palm-

shaded orchestra! Man is incapable of these exquisite transformations. By day a gruff and hurried machine—at evening, at best, a rapt and laconic poker player. A change with no suggestion of the miraculous.

Do not let us for a moment imagine that because man is ceasing to remove his hat at her entrance into crowded elevators, or because he hustles her or allows her to hang by the straps in crowded cars, that he is tending to forget this supernaturalism of woman. Such change in his manners merely means his respect for her disguise, her disguise as a business woman. By day she desires to be regarded as just that, and she resents as untimely the recognition of her sex, her mystery and her marvel during business hours. Man's apparent impoliteness, therefore, is actually a delicate modern form of chivalry. But of course his real feelings are only respectfully masked, and, let her be in any danger or real discomfort, or let any language be uttered unseemly for her ears, and we know what promptly happens. Barring such accidents, man tacitly understands that her incognito is to be respected—till the charming moment comes when she chooses to put it aside and take at his hands her immemorial tribute.

So, you see, she is able to go about the rough ways, taking part even in the rough work of the world, literally bearing what the fairy tales call a charmed life. And this, of course, gives her no small advantage in the human conflict. So protected, she is enabled, when need arises, to take the offensive, with a minimum of danger. Consider her recent campaign for suffrage, for example. Does anyone suppose that, had she been anything but woman, a sacrosanct being, immune from clubs and bullets, that she would have been allowed to carry matters with such high victorious hand as in England—and more power to her!—she has of late been doing. Let men attempt such tactics, and their shrift is uncomplimentarily short. It may be said that woman enjoys this immunity with children and curates, but, even so, it may be held that these latter partici-

pate in a less degree in that divine nature with which woman is so completely armored.

How with this rage
Shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

exclaims Shakespeare.

But there is indeed the mystery, for, though its "action is no stronger than a flower," the power wielded by beauty in this world, and therefore by woman as its most dynamic embodiment, is as undeniable as it is irresistible. "Terrible as an army with banners" was no mere figure of lovesick speech. It is as plain a truth as the properties of radium, and belongs to the same order of marvel. Such scientific discoveries are particularly welcome as demonstrating the power of the finer, as contrasted with the more brutally obvious, manifestations of force; for they thus illustrate the probable nature of those spiritual forces whose operations we can plainly see without being able to account for them. A foolish phrase has it that "a woman's strength is in her helplessness." "Helplessness" is a curious term to use for a mysteriously concentrated or super-refined form of strength. "Whose action is no stronger than a flower." But is the action of a flower any less strong because it is not the action of a fist? As a motive force a flower may be, and indeed has time and again been, stronger than a thousand fists. And what then shall we say of the action of that flower of flowers that is woman—that flower that not only once or twice in history has

. . . launched a thousand ships
And burned the topless towers of Ilium.

Woman's helplessness, forsooth! On the contrary, woman is the best equipped fighting machine that ever went to battle. And she is this, not from any suffering on the part of man, not from any consideration on his part toward her "weakness," but merely because he cannot help himself, because nature has so made her.

No simple reasoning will account for her influence over man. It is not an influence he allows. It is an influence he

cannot resist, and it is an influence which he cannot explain, though he may make believe to do so. That "protection," for example, which he extends to her from the common physical perils with which he is more muscularly constituted to cope—why is it extended? Merely out of pity to a weaker being than himself? Does other weakness always command his pity? We know that it does not. No, this "protection" is but a part of an instinctive reverence, for which he can give no reason, the same kind of reverence which he has always given to divine beings, to any manifestation or vessel of the mysteriously sacred something in human life. He respects and protects woman from the same instinct which makes him shrink from profaning an altar or robbing a church, or sends him on his knees before any apparition supposedly divine. Priests and women are often classed together, but not because the priests are regarded as effeminately "helpless"; rather because both are recognized as ministers of sacred mysteries, both belong to the spiritual sphere, and have commerce with the occult holiness of things. Also be it remarked that this "protection" is chiefly needed against the brutality and bestiality of man's own heart, which woman and religion alike rather hold in subjection by their mysterious influence than have to thank for any favors of self-control. Man "protects" woman because he first worships her, because, if she has for him not always the beauty of holiness, she at least always suggests the holiness of beauty.

Now when has man ever suggested holiness to the most adoring woman? I do not refer to the professional holiness of saints and ecclesiastics, but to that sense of hallowed strangeness, of mystic purity, of spiritual exquisiteness, which breathes from a beautiful woman and makes the touch of her hand a religious ecstasy, and her very garments a thrilling mystery. How impossible it is to imagine a woman writing the "Vita Nuova," or a girl feeling toward a boy such feelings of awe and worship as set the boy Dante a-tremble at his first

sight of the girl Beatrice. "At that moment," he writes, "I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulse of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words: "*Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi.* (Here is a deity stronger than I, who, coming, shall rule over me.)"

And, loverlike, he records of "this youngest of the angels" that "her dress on that day was of a most noble color, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age." Ah, that "little frock," that sacred little frock we first saw her in! Don't we all know it? And the little handkerchief, scented like the breath of heaven, we begged as a sacred relic! And—

Long after you are dead

I will kiss the shoes of your feet. . . .

Ah, yes, anything she has worn or touched, for, as a modern writer has said, "Everything a woman wears or touches immediately incarnates something of herself. A handkerchief, a glove, a flower—with a breath she endows them with immortal souls."

Waller with his girdle, Donne with "that subtle wreath of hair about his arm," the mediæval knight riding at tourney with his lady's sleeve at his helm and all relic-worshipping lovers through the ages bear witness to that divine supernaturalism of woman. To touch the hem of that little frock, to kiss the mere imprint of those little feet, is to be purified and exalted. But when did man affect woman in that way? I am tolerably well read in the poetry of woman's emotions, but I recall no parallel expressions of feeling. No passionate apostrophes of his golf stockings come to my mind, nor wistful recollections of the trousers he wore on that never-to-be-forgotten afternoon. The immaculate collar that spanned his muscular throat finds no Waller to sing it:

A narrow compass—and yet there

Dwelt all that's good, and all that's fair,
and probably the smartest negligée shirt
that ever sported with the summer

winds on a clothesline has never caused the smallest flutter in feminine bosoms. The very suggestion is, of course, absurd—whereas with women, in very deed, it is as with the temple in Keats's lines:

. . . even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self."

Properly understood, therefore, the cult of the skirt dancer has a religious significance, and man's preoccupation with petticoats is but the popular recognition of the divinity of woman. All that she is and does and wears has a ritualistic character, and she herself commands our reverence because we feel her to be the vessel of sacred mysteries, the earthly representative of unearthly powers, with which she enjoys an intimacy of communication denied to man. It is not a reasonable feeling, or one to be reasoned about; and that is why we very properly exempt woman from the necessity of being reasonable. She is not, we say, a reasonable being, and in so saying we pay her a profound compliment. For she transcends reason, and on that very account is mysteriously wise, the wisest of created things—mother-wise. When we say "mother wit," we mean something deeper than we realize—for what in the universe is wiser than a mother, fed as she is through the strange channels of her being with that lore of the infinite which seems to enter her body by means of organs subtler than the brain?

A certain famous novelist meant well when recently he celebrated woman as "the mother of the male," but such celebration, while ludicrously masculine

in its egotistic limitation, would have fallen short even if he had stopped to mention that she was the mother of the female, too; for not merely in the fact that she is the mother of the race resides the essential mystery of her motherhood. We do not value woman merely, if one may be permitted the expression, as a brood mare, an economic factor controlling the census returns. Her gift of motherhood is stranger than that, and includes spiritual affinities and significances not entirely represented by visible babies. Her motherhood is mysterious because it seems to be one with the universal motherhood of nature, one with the motherhood that guards and warms to life the eggs in the nest and the seeds in the hollows of the hills, the motherhood of the whole strange vital process wherever and howsoever it moves and dreams and breaks into song and flower. And, as nature is something more than a mother, so is woman. She is a vision, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace and goodness at the heart of life; and her beauty is the sacred seal which the gods have set upon her in token of her supernatural meaning and mission; for all beauty is the message of the immortal to mortality. Always when man has been in doubt concerning his gods, or in despair amid the darkness of his destiny, his heart has been revived by some beatific vision.

Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.

Woman is our permanent Beatific
Vision in the darkness of the world.



THE OTHER SIDE

By Guy Templeton

AT Christmas time too oft the ghost
Of Banquo comes to spoil the feast;
We find the gift we like the most
Is from the one we like the least.

TO GIRLS

By Terrell Love Holliday

FLIRT, and the world flirts with you. Be prim, and you walk alone. Nothing betrays a lack of early training so much as being rude to the wrong people.

Decide early whether you prefer being called vulgar because you dress in the height of style, or dowdy because you do not.

When a man gets far enough along to ask if he may have a kiss, he intends to take one whether or no. Don't spoil the flavor by saying yes.

A little beauty is a dangerous thing; therefore, get in your work before you grow big and harmless.

Even if you just can't make your eyes behave, you can train them not to waste their misbehavior on impossible parties.

If, when you put your trust in a man, you put the man in a safe and lock it, your trust may not be misplaced. At that, it is well to keep your eye on the safe; he may be a safe cracker.

Rouge, and men will say you ought not to; don't; and they will say you should. Moral: Get it on so skillfully that they will think nature did it, and they will rave about your exquisite coloring.

When an applicant for the position of husband can produce references from his ex-wives, you will be safe in giving him the job. If he wasn't satisfactory maritally, he must have been alimonarily.

When selecting a husband, feel of his heart to learn if it is tender, and of his pocketbook to ascertain if it is fat.

Never inquire about your fiancé's past. It will be easier for you to help him bury it if you don't know what a big job you are undertaking.

Don't make the mistake of learning to cook because you have read that the road to a man's heart lies through his stomach. You can hire a guide.

While you are single the world may mistake vivacity for sagacity, but the unerring diagnosis of an unfeeling husband will be—loquacity.

Strive for originality. One way to attain it would be by observing the conventional standards of the last decade.

Always be kind to the aged. You never can tell when some old millionaire with one foot in the grave may be thinking of asking you to become his widow.

Take a course in Domestic Science by all means; a D. S. degree makes fine matrimonial bait, and you can soon forget—if you learned anything.

It is easy to acquire a reputation as a brilliant conversationalist. Always talk to men about themselves, and to women about their clothes.

Skill with the needle is to be desired if you intend to become a modiste, but it is a fatal accomplishment for the woman who hates home made gowns.

Don't promise to be a sister to a man. The very latest is: "Sorry, old chap; I can't just now. Drop around next time you are at liberty and we'll see." If you accept, don't murmur: "Oh, this is so sudden!" The up-to-the-minute girl says: "Good boy! I knew you had the spunk, if you *were* a little slow."

THE HEART OF MANHATTAN

By Edgar Saltus

THERE is a malady known to pathologists as Displacement of the Heart. One of the symptoms or, more exactly, one of the results, is loss of memory. The patient forgets. He becomes aphasiac. At first he cannot remember names. Then words, then faces desert him. Finally the consciousness of his own identity escapes.

What happens to men may happen to cities. Where is the heart of Manhattan?

At an epoch relatively recent we used to think it safely situated in Madison Square. At the time there was not a shop on Fifth Avenue. The first to put one there was Mrs. Paran Stevens. Previously, residence on the sacred site was by the many endearingly regarded as equivalent to a title. Afterward the avenue became smeared with trade. Today it is submerged by it. But, at the initial sacrilege, the late Mr. Lorillard rebelled. Said Mrs. Stevens, who was rather quick with her tongue: "You wouldn't mind, now, would you, if it were a tobacco shop?" At that, Mr. Lorillard subsided.

It may have become obvious to him, as shortly it was obvious to others, that the heart of Manhattan was moving. It was moving then, as it had moved before, and as it will continue to move until its displacement is completed. When that day comes, it will have no heart whatever. It will be a market instead of a city.

The witcheries that Cinderella encountered bewilder New York, once the Cinderella of cities, has experienced bewilderments beside which those of fairy lore are trite. Originally the island on which Manhattan now clamors,

and of which today the value is over two thousand million, was purchased by Dutch traders for a bag of wampum and bead. Slowly thereafter a transformation began that latterly has been alarming the residents away. Witcheries never did more, and clearly could not do worse.

The Dutch were less startling. They set up a trading post, named it Nieuw Amsterdam, argued a bit and then, in jugs of Schnapps, baptized it Nieuw Orange. The effect of the baptism, though not perhaps of the Schnapps, was brief. After another argument—with England—the town became definitely New York.

These details Manhattan has forgotten. Her memory was better then. The town, too, was what it has long ceased to be, a highly engaging resort. It extended from Bowling Green to Wall Street. Without was a wilderness; within was the élite.

The élite was as exclusive as any élite can be. It comprised ten families—the upper ten. Some were quite wealthy. They had hundreds of dollars. Others had nearly a thousand. All resided in or about the Breede Weg.

The Breede Weg—Broadway—today, barring trade routes, the longest commercial stretch on the planet, was then but a lane, and the heart of the town. About it were little gabled houses, checkered with black and yellow brick, furnished with slender spinnets, immense four-posters and portraits of ancestral frights. The burghers were equally delightful. The women wore crimson petticoats and an air of reserve. The men had velvet vestments and a natural corpulence, studiously cultivated, splendidly maintained.

In this expansiveness was the *souche* of the Knickerbocker set, which, until submerged by plutocracy's rising flood, gave to local society a fastidiousness that, in common with other things, Manhattan has since forgotten. But, even in expanding, the burghers did not constitute the entire population. At the close of the seventeenth century, New York had five thousand inhabitants. Fifty years after the number had doubled. At that time the city was smaller than Philadelphia, smaller, too, than Boston and less democratic than either. It had social lines that were not merely clothes lines and which, more tightly drawn than anywhere else, were tighter still than they are today.

Contemporaneous New York is composed of two classes—the superselect and the rest of the world. There were five classes then. In the fifth class were slaves. In the fourth were free working people. In the third were free traders. In the second were freeholders. In the first were free livers.

These last, the freest of all, free even from that hypocrisy which has been perhaps rather laboriously cultivated since, were the manorial lords, the landed gentry, the real thing, whose tone, borrowed from Pall Mall, made up in candor what it lacked in cant. Given to bad language, sweet essences and hauteur, and, in the gentler sex, to paint, patches and perversity, they had stunning sedan chairs, regiments of retainers, chariots blazing with blasons, coaches conducted by postilions, in which, bewigged, cocked-hatted, preceded by outriders, they drove to tenant-tilled estates, or else, with leisure before them and lackeys behind, condescendingly promenaded the Mall.

The Mall—near Trinity Church—was an estuary of Broadway, which itself was still the heart of the town. As yet no displacement had occurred, nor were there any symptoms of it until a sovereign had been flipped across the ocean and the cheap and dirty trading post had become the capital of the United States.

New York then, adolescent still, was infested with pigs, strewn with garbage,

infamously paved, infrequently lighted, miasmatic, cheerful and bedrabbled. It had the defects of its qualities. It was young, it was gay and it had begun to grow. On the east side it extended to Broome Street. On the west, it reached above Warren. Beyond these limits were swamps, farms, country seats, pretty girls and fine manners.

The manners are no more. With the seats, the farms and the swamps, they are gone. But pretty girls are a local specialty still. It is not they that afflicted the heart of Manhattan—though how they have perturbed it, we all are, or should be, aware. The distemper, due originally to what has caused many another since, was brought about by prices. When the city was reaching out to the seats and the swamps—reaching, too, as it ever has, to the girls—prices were soaring.

The first recorded sale of real estate was a lot, thirty feet front by a hundred and ten deep, that fetched nine dollars. That was in the beginning of things. After the flipping of the sovereign, when the new residential district on the west side was open, it was not possible to get a lot for a penny less than five hundred dollars. The amount was not, though, considered excessive, and rightly perhaps, since a diarist noted there “the pleasant odors wafted from the apple orchards and buckwheat fields of the fragrant Jersey shore.” Ideal as that may seem, the story of it relates to but a trifle over a hundred years ago.

In those scented days, there were so many people about and so few roofs to shelter them, that a house famine occurred, as a result of which the homeless stored their effects in the City Hall and went to jail for lodgings.

That famine may seem exceptional. It is constant, with, however, a difference. Caused originally by lack of roofs, today it is due to a multiplication of them—but of roofs that top office buildings and department stores erected on what once were homes. There is another difference. People whom trade evicts omit to utilize the municipality. In a fashion more dignified, it may be, and certainly more significant, they ship

elsewhere their effects and distribute p. c. cards.

A hundred years ago conditions were less desperate. Trade was not occupied in putting householders in the street. The social barometer pointed only to fine weather. Such variations as it indicated, seemingly, were minor. The landed gentry—otherwise landed since—had perhaps begun to look a bit provincial. Chariots, outriders and hauteur were no longer precisely the thing. Then, too, immigration had begun. Energy and enterprise were adventuring this way. The star of democracy was rising.

These variations, apparently insignificant, actually were portentous. They heralded the premonitory tremors of the impulsion that was to batter down New York, toss her up anew, land her where she sits among the metropolises of the world and make of Cinderbritch the noisiest, greediest, least habitable of cities.

A century ago the town was more engaging. Cinderella was still down at the heel. The slattern was careless, cheap and wayward. But she was acquiring a charm that thereafter was to increase until, in sheer allurements, it so exceeded the attractions of other American cities that, by common consent, New York became the cis-Atlantic belle.

The charm, long since attenuated, soon altered. To the graces of adolescence, a maturer radiance came. Prior to the Civil War, the early allurements was but budding. As it flowered, the heart of the town, displaced anew, loitered a while in the neighborhood of Bleeker Street and Bond. Then it passed from there, farther and farther upward.

These ascents drew with them the Union Club, an institution which, founded in antebellum nights, was the first local establishment of the kind. Its primal home was the Leroy house near White Street. From there it moved to the Astor residence near Bond, then to that of the Kernochans, which was higher up on Broadway, afterward to Twenty-first Street and Fifth Avenue, and, latterly, to the vicinity of the Plaza.

These changes disclose habits so highly migratory that, ultimately, one may expect to see the Union perched in Harlem, where it will be still the first club in the city—to those coming in town that way.

But certainly those that keep at it will see it there no more. It will go, as the heart of Manhattan is going, effaced from the things that have been by the things to be. Among the latter is the perhaps obvious elimination of residential New York.

Already, barring oases infrequent and doomed, there does not today remain a habitable site below Madison Square. Fifth Avenue has become so wholly commercial that a promenader who did not know better might fancy himself in Chicago. In the memory of men yet living, Madison Square was a suburban resort. In the memory of women still lively, Fifth Avenue was so distinctly the street of fashion that its fame as such was unique. Now fashion has gone from it. Except in the Plaza region, it is residentially defunct. Dead otherwise is all the lower portion of the city. Sooner or later the middle and upper districts must go. Demonstrably, then, whatever remains trade will acquire as already it will have acquired the rest.

Therein is the doom of the resident. Trade has already ousted him considerably. When it could not do worse, it flung him into flats; failing that, into apartment hotels. Things such as these are not residences. A residence is a place in which one's people have lived and one's progeny emerge. It is the home heritable and inherited. To call six rooms and a bath by such a name is ignoble. It degrades a word that everywhere else is sacred. But, save coin, nothing is sacred to business. In pursuit of itself, business has shoved the heart of Manhattan from Bowling Green to the Plaza. There and in the adjacent precincts is the final citadel of fashion. When that falls, residential New York will be on its last legs and with nowhere for those legs to take it. Other cities may expand. Because of the natural limits of the island, Manhattan cannot. What alone it can do is climb.

To that end, skyscraping towers of Babel and Bedlam have unremittingly erupted. The ceaseless ascension of obese department stores has been almost quite as volcanic. With these, the constant increase of Gargantuan hotels and, with them, the remorseless multiplication of cyclopean scarps, soaring pinnacles and threats in stone, promise that, ultimately, the entire island will be covered by buildings so huge that there can be nothing huger. In the existing monsters there is occasionally a splendor that disconcerts, but when the whole city is topped by them, the splendor will be not merely disconcerting—in the dream lore of fairyland there will be nothing so opulent nor yet so forlorn.

Of the latter aspect, portents are not confined to the mounting basilicas of trade. They are more particularly indicated by the disappearance of the householder that uninterrupted demolitions compel and by the p. p. c.'s of the evicted which, plentiful enough as it is, will surely continue until fashion, menaced on one side by the trade of Fifth Avenue, always pushing up, and on the other by that of Harlem, now reaching down, is ejected from its final fastness.

The prospect may not seem catastrophic. It will be appalling. When fashion departs, the rest of us will follow. We won't be able to help ourselves. From a cheap and dirty trading post New York has become the most elaborate spot on earth. Today, with a penny less than a million, you are not

necessarily next door to a pauper but you live in the same street. Shortly you will not be able to live even there. The houses will be razed, and on their sites will rise mountain ranges of office buildings with but a windswept, sunless gorge between. It is that which makes the prospect appalling. The charm of any city consists in its homes and haunts. But when the haunts are mercantile and the homes are gone, there is a market instead of a city.

Already Manhattan is aphasiac. The displacement that began long years ago has steadily progressed. There are names and places and faces that she remembers no more. There are others of which once she was happily ignorant. But when, transformed by trade from a metropolis into a market, she shall have lost her identity, as already she has lost her memory, displacement will be complete.

From the Battery to Harlem, then, Manhattan will be one vast bazaar, wholly commercial, utterly heartless, thronged by day, vacant at night, a sort of glowing Gehenna, into which each morning from Long Island, from Jersey, from Connecticut, from regions remoter yet, hordes of human beings will pour and plot and scheme for gold, toil and trick for it, contrive and fight, and, when the horrible day is done, scurry back to their warrens, to their soap bubble loves and hates.

When that time comes, sightseers need not bother to come and look. Doré's pictures of the Inferno will suffice them.



MADGE—What was there so embarrassing about the Christmas present she sent you?

MARJORIE—I gave her my opinion of it before I knew it came from her.



HOKUS—Harduppe says he owes everything to his wife.

POKUS—Harduppe is a double distilled prevaricator. [He owes ten dollars to me.

THE ESTERBROOKE MYSTERY

By Mary Heaton Vorse

FROM the time I was a lad of seventeen I have made an addition to the Litany, which reads: "From the mercy of the just, Good Lord, deliver us." For the mercy of such men is more blighting than the incompassionate judgment of virtuous women. I see the fruits of their mercy in boys who draw back from sympathy as from a blow; in girls who seem to ask forgiveness for having been born; sometimes I see their reaction in granite-faced, terrible women, but always in the trail of implacable goodness follows spiritual blight. When I see good men secure and splendid in their own dignity, followed by meek and colorless wives who seem to ask only that they may be left in the shadow, I wonder what sweet flowers of gaiety have been crushed, what long torture turned a gentle and happy spirit into a gray ghost of a woman.

That I understood this so young was because I was the only one of all our town except James Williston who held the key to the tragedy which is still called "The Esterbrooke Mystery," and don't think that he understood wholly, being too close to the heart of it for clear vision.

He had the soft heart of a girl, and all the cowardliness of a girl who is very sweet but who has no initiative, and when you have a girl's lack of self-control and absence of courage racketing around in a young man's body it is generally bad business for someone, most of all for the man himself.

When Esterbrooke went away one summer and married a girl twenty years younger than himself, tongues wagged hard enough through all the disap-

pointed feminine community. Esterbrooke was the president of the bank and the big man of the town besides—an upholder of the church, a financier; one heard him spoken of as a just man. He owned the shoe factory; he dictated political measures. He was slow-spoken and deep-voiced; just a hint of the frock coat manner about him; just a suspicion in his voice always and in his bearing of how well he thought of Esterbrooke—this was inoffensive. Beside this, he was handsome in a conspicuous sort of way, with a big fine head and handsome dark brown eyes, though I always hated the slick way his hair was plastered down each side of his face. At the time, however, I looked on Esterbrooke with the awe that a lad just turned seventeen gives to the big man of his village, especially when that great man has undertaken to build out of this village a town.

The first time I ever saw young Mrs. Esterbrooke was through the windows of her great house where I had driven my mother and sister to call. The Esterbrooke dwelling was set on a hill and sentineled by great trees; it looked down on the rest of Durringham as though by its very position it wished to proclaim what eminent people its walls had sheltered.

As we were waiting for the door to be opened I watched Mrs. Esterbrooke through the window, and was surprised that the great Esterbrooke's wife looked a little girl—more suitable to be my sweetheart. There was a lightness to her step that was different from that of any girl I had ever seen. Her blonde hair blew about her face in frivolous and willful curls. I remember that she drifted around the room as we waited, making a pretense of putting things to

rights and of arranging the flowers, but she seemed to me like some restless winged thing that floats aimlessly around the confining spaces of a room into which it has come by chance, looking forever and ever for the road of escape. At last the iron-faced old housekeeper, Mittie, opened the door and led us into the presence of Mrs. Esterbrooke.

Her voice had a soft Southern, slurring, caressing note, and the corners of her mouth were turned up as though laughter and gaiety were her birthright. But during our visit she sat very composed, her hands folded, and gave the impression of a very good little girl playing the part of a grown-up lady. For all the exquisite beauty of her and her high stature she might have been two years younger than she was.

Two or three times she started and looked around as though afraid of something. This was the only thing that differentiated this call from a thousand others—until at the end, when we were taking our leave, she turned to me with a sudden impulse, and speaking rapidly as though she were taking all her courage in her hands, her eyes traveling apprehensively to my mother to see how she would take it:

"You make me think of my brother," she said. "He's a little younger than you. Come and see me—please come and see me, won't you?"

I promised to do this, and when we got to our carriage my sister turned to my mother.

"Well, that was a funny proceeding," she said.

I noticed that the tears stood in my mother's eyes, and she replied to my sister sharply:

"There's a poor little lonely child, I can tell you, in that house."

"Well," said my sister with the cruelty of the young, "that poor little lonely child looks to me like a mighty lucky girl."

And so it seemed, for the next time I saw her was at a dance for young people. This was an innovation, for, as is usual in most New England towns, the young people and married were rigorously divided. When we arrived the hostess

exclaimed to my mother, who was one of the one or two older ladies present:

"We're going to have young Mrs. Esterbrooke with us tonight. Such a kind man Mr. Esterbrooke—so comprehending! He came to me and said: 'Dear Mrs. Carlton, I'm going to ask a favor of you—I'm going to ask you for an invitation. Ailse is a young girl, by chance married to a staid gentleman like myself. I don't wish to shorten her girlhood for her. She needs the companionship of her contemporaries.'"

"It is kind," said my mother thoughtfully. And just then my heart gave a sudden leap, for she stood there in the doorway—a lovelier thing than I had ever looked at. Since then I have seen some beautiful paintings in Italy, and she seems to me more like one of those pictures of the naive and shimmering angels that the early masters loved to paint than any other thing that I have ever seen, painted or real.

She was dressed in very pale blue and silver, and on her curling hair was a little wreath of blue forget-me-nots. To my boyish imagination she seemed like a being from another world come down among us. The quality of her bare arms and throat, and the delicate color of her face and that appealing look of thwarted joy—a serious, entreating look on that face made for smiles and dimples—set her as much apart among us as did her conspicuous position as Mr. Esterbrooke's wife. And when she danced the impression was deepened, for she seemed to me to be dancing like a somnambulist, her wide eyes fixed on some very distant place.

With all the older fellows there crowding around her I didn't dare go near her, but she spied me in my corner and the sweet mechanical thing suddenly took on life. She came to me in a little impetuous rush of eagerness. There was a catch in her breath like one who unexpectedly sees a familiar face in the midst of an infinitely lonely crowd.

"You, Henry," she said, "*here*—and not asking me to dance!"

I knew she looked as she must have looked at home—a mock reproach in her tone at variance with the caress-

ing look of her eyes and shadowy dimples.

"Come, dance with me," she said.

And that time she danced. No one in Durringham had ever seen such dancing; it had the quality of light and air and grace such as the great premières of the world have had.

"See," she said, "that's the way one dances."

I think it was her one talent beside her beauty. I know in that little company of rigidly trained young New Englanders many stopped to watch. We danced only the ordinary steps of the waltz, but I know I felt myself transfigured, dancing with a fire that I didn't know I had, that I didn't know dancing gave to one, though I was fond enough of it.

Especially I saw James Williston staring at her. He stood like a man seeing visions, unconscious of his surroundings, and only pulled himself together when the dance stopped, and advanced straight on Mrs. Esterbrooke. And when he would have claimed the next dance, she refused with pretty apology in her glance and, as though to explain her rebuff further, because she couldn't bear to hurt any living creature.

"I have already promised it to Henry," she said. "He looks like my own brother—and my home's a long way off." The little quaver of her voice as she said this must have clutched at his heart, for he was pitiful as a woman. And there was no more peace in the world, I think, after that for James Williston.

We did not dance, but went out together into the soft night, and I, who knew the Carltons' place well, led to a little summer house where we sat down on the steps in the moonlight. I sat looking at her stupidly, wondering at her loveliness and trying to frame a boy's compliment, when in her eyes I saw a look of complete terror and then she covered her face with her hands and shivered, and tremor after tremor ran through her whole body. I put my hand on her arm and whispered:

"Oh, what is it? What is it? Please tell me!" I was in an agony of pity,

and also terribly embarrassed in the presence of this shattering emotion of whose origin I knew nothing.

Suddenly she rose to her feet and clenched her hands over her soft breast and threw back her head as though in a very transport of anguish, and I caught the words, very low and deep:

"Oh, the horror—the horror!"

The nameless agony in the tone of her voice made me feel as though a door had been opened through which I looked down into black depths upon depths of terror and suffering. I took hold of her dress timidly and shook the delicate fabric.

"You mustn't do this—you mustn't!" I told her, and I don't think I spoke above a whisper. And still she stood there, her sweet little head thrown back rigid and her bare hands clenched above her breast. Then her head relaxed and she looked down on me, and I could see the deep trouble in her eyes.

"I don't know any way out," she said. "There isn't any way out at all." It was the tone of a child speaking in a nightmare. I felt as if I wanted to wake her up, and say, "It isn't so—it isn't so!" But all I could find to say was:

"Tell me about it."

This was the first time that she seemed aware of me. She paused a moment before she answered me, saying, in a voice that was curiously deep:

"Tell you about it? How could I find words—I couldn't find words. I don't understand."

"Sit down beside me," I implored her. And very obediently—for by nature she was the most docile and the gentlest of beings—she seated herself, and I took her hand in mine and patted it. I didn't know anything else to do. It seemed to me that I could hear the terrible beating of her heart. She broke the silence again, peering at me with wide, questioning eyes through the shimmering, pale moonlight.

"I have been as though drugged with terror," she said, "and seeing you waked me up. And he—he is perfectly and absolutely content." She looked to me

for a reply, as though I should unriddle the mystery of it to her.

That night I lay awake long, her cry of "Oh, the horror—the horror!" reverberating through all my being. It was unlike any grief of which I had ever heard. It painted a darkness of soul so vast, so beyond grief, so life-destroying, that I was sick and shuddered at it, though I didn't yet understand, wondering only that I had been mutely asked to explain. "And he is perfectly content." It gave me a picture of Esterbrooke.

"Perfectly content" he had seemed when he had dropped in late in the evening, for she had gone back to the house after a time with the utmost gallantry and danced as she had danced with me, though with a little touch of madness that heightened the beauty of her; she danced as though under the inspiration of pain. And Esterbrooke, handsome, youthful-looking for his years, danced with her once before leaving, in that splendid, condescending way of his. In that dance the madness of her died out, leaving her as she was at first, a lovely, sweet body whose soul and mind were asleep.

My sister's comments on her as I walked home with her that night summed up those of the feminine population of Durringham, and I bore them with sullen silence, realizing that I knew too much to take up arms for Ailse.

"That girl's a little fool," my sister remarked crisply. "I can't understand a man like Mr. Esterbrooke, intellectual and dignified, marrying a brainless girl for just her pretty face." Since then I have learned that women, as a rule, don't like those hapless and adorable children who are made, like Ailse Esterbrooke, only for happiness and love, and see the world only with their hearts and not at all with their heads.

It is at this point that I must drop the name of Esterbrooke in regard to Ailse, for from that time on I walked behind the ugly supports on which the fair and beautiful surface of the Esterbrooke household were laid. The awful

shivering fear of her and the cry: "He is perfectly satisfied!" gave me its measure, though I felt it only in my emotions and hadn't translated its significance into words yet. Nor did Ailse ever try to explain much further. How could she? Words are not for such things.

Still quick with pity, still shaken with my first glimpse of what a terrible thing the strife of woman with man may be, I went to see her. Halfway up the hill I met Esterbrooke coming toward me. He greeted me paternally and said the moment for my call was opportune—business called him, leaving Mrs. Esterbrooke alone—and so— Nothing could have been kinder than his words; yet the quality of his kindness made my ears burn; at once it seemed absurd of me to be calling on the wife of the great Esterbrooke. And just how absurd it was, and just how magnanimous it was of him to allow and understand his young wife's vagaries, I felt he knew to a hair's breadth.

At the sight of him so serene, so composed, so altogether satisfied with life, it seemed that I must have dreamed the scene of the other night. But this feeling was dispelled forever by what I saw when I came up to the veranda. Ailse was sitting in the early twilight listless. At the sound of my footsteps on the veranda I saw her start and her eyes widen and a hunted look come into them. Then an expression of deep relief came over her as she held out both hands to me.

I sat there a while and we said little. A tacit understanding was between us, I realizing how hunted she was and how hard pressed that a lad like myself should be the only one in all this town to whom she could turn. I could fancy her scanning face after face, as the town, dressed in its best, presented itself before her little shivering form, searching the faces of the older women for some answering gleam, ready to offer it with its sweet incense, then withdraw it, and at last finding only first me and then James Williston, and no woman at all beyond Mittie, the Esterbrookes' iron-faced housekeeper who, as I look back,

seemed perpetually hovering in the background like some New England fate.

After a while the night breeze came up cold and we went inside. The drawing room was lighted softly with candles. Some subtle change had come over her since the dance. The white flame of revolt was burning quietly and steadily and I felt that the war was on. And from the sight of him I had had I was sure, too, that Esterbrooke didn't know of any war. I cannot remember the steps by which we finally came to the story of the letter.

"I've told him that I've tried to fill my contract," she told me. Then she paused a minute, quivering. I waited.

"He didn't know what I meant—I couldn't make him understand anything. He said: 'My dear child—go home for as long as you like.' I wrote to them—how could I make them understand? My sweet, soft mother—my darlingest mother—she wrote to him about girlish vagaries and patience." And at that Ailse laughed to herself—an uncanny little whisper of a laugh. "She asked *him* to have patience—"

"He has it," I answered her. "He has it—he's fond of you."

"Fond!" she cried out at me in a sort of fury. "Don't say that in this house. There's no fondness here—I've been brought up in the midst of love!"

"How came you here, then?" I blurted out.

"Oh, it's very easy," she said drearily. "He gets what he wants—he does as he pleases with silly people like me. He came to us—we are happy, down-at-the-heel people—oh, so poor—with a big house that we love over us, and always starving ourselves for it and our flowers and animals. And he came—and looked at me. He wanted me to amuse him and smile for him and do my tricks for him; he wanted me—" She covered her face in her hands and I knew that she shivered as she had the first night, but this time I didn't dare to look at her.

"I told him I didn't love him," she went on after a time. "I've never been in love with anybody, you know," and somehow the little serious tone in which she spoke made me think of a little girl

of perhaps ten years old uttering these words. "They all liked him. It happened very quickly."

We were quiet again. The light of a candle flickered behind some flowers. She took up a little old-fashioned extinguisher from the tray beside it and slowly put out the light. The flame quivered under it, licked up for a moment over the slowly descending, inexorable cover.

"I understand nothing," she said. "I only know that this is he." I saw her shadowy finger point to the extinguisher. "And this is I." She touched the smoking candle.

"Oh," she said, "his heavy hand is on me—his heavy hand—and on everyone who is near him—on this town and the people. It would have been so with any woman," she assured me, "only with many it would have taken longer."

Again I found nothing to say, and after a while:

"Do you know," she asked me, "why you are allowed to come here? It's because he enjoys his own goodness."

And so it was: I was allowed to come and Ailse was allowed, nay, ordered, to go to parties of young people of her own age. In some mysterious way his kindness fed his egotism, fed his complacency—a sweet mouthful on which it grew fat. I have seen such things often since, and when I think of Ailse and her—"It would have been so with any woman, only with many it would have taken longer"—those gray ghosts of women make me wince with pity in memory of my friend.

"I felt afraid—oh, so afraid to tell him that I wanted to go. I might have spared myself that—he smiled at it as if it had been a whim. He said I would soon accustom myself to—life with him."

"Perhaps you will," I said.

"Ah!" she cried. "That's what I'm afraid of! Does one wish to live on in the world after one dies? I would have to be born again—"

We looked together at what such a rebirth would mean, with the straight eyes of uncompromising youth, and I know now why it was that she could seek no

older woman, for they have learned to bargain for peace with life.

"I have seen women who have gotten used to being beaten—and to many other things. I know now why they all look the same." We looked together at the anguish of such rebirth. I saw as plainly as though it had walked before me the ghost of Ailse the happy, the flame of her burnt out; a gray desolation that made the horror in which she lived a happy state.

This was her first battle and she had lost. Esterbrooke, impregnable behind the wall of his goodness, had not heard the sound of it even.

Her next was when she sent for her brother. She had felt that he would understand somehow and help her parents to understand. So sure was she that serenity came to her as she waited for him.

But the first time I saw them together I saw he was too young, and I saw she knew also. It was hopeless and impossible to try and talk with him. What he saw was that his sister had fine horses that she could drive when she chose; he saw that she had changed, and wasn't so gay, and with the unseeing cruelty of a young lad he resented this and imagined that she was putting on airs. The current between them was disconnected. They had both been children together with only two years between them, and now he found her grown up, an unattainable thing, clothed, though he did not know it, in her own sorrow, pacing round and round in the weary treadmill, trying to escape from it. Her confidence that she could communicate with him and league with him, and that he would help her in the difficult road of communication with her parents, withered almost at sight of him.

James Williston's face began to stand out of the crowd of Durringham people just at the time when Ailse realized that the brother on whom she had so counted could see nothing but externals. It was the utter lack of comprehension of the boy that threw into relief the blind understanding of the man, for I can say for him more than of anyone I ever knew that he perceived with his heart. Know-

ing no word of all that I knew, for Ailse never talked to him as she did to me, he read with his heart how deep her trouble was—and that was enough for him. And she turned her face to sympathy and understanding as a flower to the sun.

He knew how to love and how to make love, but that is not for a man who wishes to rescue his beloved from despair. But he made love so sweetly and so closely that he warmed Ailse's cold hands at the fire of his heart; he thawed the cold fear in her that made her fear the love of man. The gentleness of him and his tenderness were to her infinitely comforting—comforting and nothing else. There were times when I have been glad that she did not love him, and again my heart misgives me when I consider that absolute faith given without the glamor of love is maybe a deeper faith. Of one thing I am sure, and that is that her distraught soul saw no wrong in what she was doing, and I, who judged her naively, with the straight and savage logic of a boy, saw no wrong in her either. I was glad of any comfort for my dear, and it seemed natural to me that she could get it from James Williston. He was in my eyes a mature man, though in reality a young man of not over twenty-three and very young for his years.

As I said, he could have loved her to her death, and cherished each smile in his heart and felt that every tear of hers was holy, but he didn't know how to act; he had never acted in his life, but like a good boy had always done what he was told. And for a brief while she rested on him, imagining that because he loved her so all must be well. I don't imagine that she thought when or where or how, for she had by nature as little initiative as James Williston.

I remember her in those days as tense and shining. The road of escape seemed to unroll itself before her. She was awaiting the happy day of her deliverance. Esterbrooke himself watched their friendship with complacency. As her shivering horror had been to him modesty, and her dumb, wordless suffering acquiescence, the furious beating of her wings against the cage were the

vagaries of a young girl, vagaries which had scarcely angered him since they had given him a chance to show how magnanimous and full of understanding he could be. So now, when she stood tip-toe, ready for flight, he saw in it content, content of his own creating, since by his curious spiritual alchemy he was able to transform all events in life into incense that floated up before him, Esterbrooke.

I have said she was stretching forward, ready for flight, and what happened to her was as though indeed she had tried wingless to fly from some high and rocky place to a land of content. She had been so utterly sure that since he loved her he must find some way out that her unspoken assurance had communicated itself also to me. Indeed, she trusted herself body and soul to the creature who loved her so tenderly, and rested herself with him, even though she was too wounded and too distraught to love him with love in return.

Then what happened? One hour I saw her trembling on tiptoe, ready for her flight; the next hour I came upon her crawling back broken. What actually happened was that, going across lots to look for her, I met her on a little path that led from a grove. She walked straight past me like one blind, pitifully aged like a child shrunk from some devastating disease.

And when she almost brushed me aside, in the thread of a path through the meadow, and when I spoke to her: "Ailse—what is it, Ailse?" she nodded dumbly toward the woods and her mouth formed the words: "He's back there," and made a little hopeless gesture as though her hand were too heavy to lift, and she wanted me to leave her.

I sped down the path toward the grove, and there, lying in the grass under a tree, was James Williston, and he was rending himself with choking and difficult sobs. I stood appalled, because I had never seen a man cry, nor had I cried with anything but rage for a long time. All he did when I knelt beside him was to echo the cry that Ailse had made to me long before:

"There's no way out! There's no way out!"

And then he plucked at his shirt as though he would tear at his flesh; as though his frantic hands would pluck his very heart from out his body.

"I can do nothing for her," he said. "What can I do?" Now I can look back on him as a poor, frantic boy of three and twenty, son of a dominant mother. He had no money—he had no plan; there was no way out. Nothing he had but his own heart, that held every tender thing for Ailse except the road of deliverance; but had I been in his place I would have taken her, I think, by the hand and led her out by the highway, and then let come what might. But James Williston was not made of such stuff. He had just loved Ailse and not thought beyond the moment, and there must have come a second when he had looked down into the depths of her heart and glanced at the horror there, and had seen how hopeless it was, and had seen the horror deepen into her wordless despair.

And so I found him sobbing out his life. He realized himself in that moment, and his own inadequacies, and never again did he recover from it, and never again did he in the face of himself hold up his head. I think his own cry as he lay there of: "Useless! Useless! Useless!" rang forever in his ears. The pity of it was that if Ailse could have married him I am sure she would have been happy with him, for he had a great gift of loving.

As I tell it, it sounds long, but only for a few moments did I stand there, helpless, before he sent me to her, with a difficult:

"What are you doing *here*?"

I ran, fleet-footed, through the sweet, daisy-bordered path of the meadow to the big house on the hill, and asked the grim old housekeeper, Mittie, for Ailse. She laid a great, gaunt knuckle on my shoulder.

"I'm glad you've come," she said. "I don't like her looks. I don't like what is moving about in this house these days," which was the first intimation she had ever given me that she had any comprehension of what was going on, though she

had always shown me especial kindness and her face had lighted up when I came. Then she went on:

"There's nothing you can do for her, for well I know what's wrong in this house—it's Esterbrooke. He's a good man; and the iron blows of the goodness of him and of his father have made steel of me. When I saw this helpless lamb come here, 'God!' I said. 'You'd soften the heart of a den of thieves; you would lead murderers back to love, you bonnie, sweet thing.' And so she would soften everything but the goodness of Esterbrooke." I suppose it was the first time that she had spoken. She had stayed there through a long life in the service of Esterbrooke's mother.

While she had been talking she had been leading me up a flight of back stairs and through a corridor to an upstairs sitting room, where I found Ailse. And that Mittie was frightened and had been stirred into speech I couldn't wonder, for on the sweet face of Ailse Esterbrooke was a most terrible recklessness and fear, but there strove through and above it all an exaltation like that of a creature possessed.

"Now," she said, "now I'll find my way out. I'll tell *him*—I'll tell Esterbrooke! I'll tell him everything, and the pride of him will make him send me back. Oh," she cried, "you don't know what fear is, but there are things worse than fear. Oh, it's not for myself—it's not myself—it's for them, for my dear people who know only what it is to love each other. He'll send me back and they won't understand, and they'll suffer." She paused until the silence grew heavy and brooding between us. At last she said: "But even for that I don't care."

"I wish I could stay with you!" I cried to her. "I wish I could help you!" And my poor little wish rang out in the immensity of her despair like the noise of a penny whistle before the grave of hope.

"He'll be here," she said, "in a moment," and then: "When he comes, go down and wait, and I'll know you are there and that will help me, Henry." I have always thought that she did it more for me than for anything else; for she was

at the point of pain where nothing mattered to her, where there is no price that one will not pay for present suffering to cease.

After a while I went down, and as I descended the stairs I heard the slamming of the great front door that echoed through the whole of me in a sickening fashion, and made me feel as though the solid earth was shaking beneath my very feet. So I listened in the dark, and nothing that has happened to me since of love and despair and loss has had a moment of pain which compares with that hopeless waiting in the dark while my dear suffered and I sat quiet.

Then in the darkness I heard the noise of footsteps coming toward me rapidly, and Mittie was there.

"Come!" she said. "Come—come quick! He won't let her go—he won't let her go. I listened at the door—I listened while they talked there. Ha! He was good and noble and just, was George Esterbrooke! She told him all there was to tell—and pity 'tis there was so little. There'll be no scandal in this house. God! He *forgives* her! He's gone down to the village—he's gone to look for James Williston. 'My dear,' he says, 'it'll be painful for you to see him, and I'll make it possible for him to absent himself.' Oh," she said, "George Esterbrooke is happy tonight! He never knew until tonight the size of his own goodness. His head is up and his chest is out and the step of him is firm, and he'll squeeze the life from that bonnie child before he's through. She's the kind that can suffer so much and then no more."

We were flying through the darkness and into the house and up the stairs, and what I could say and what I could do I didn't know; I only knew I wanted to see her. Mad visions of asking her to come with me flashed through my mind.

But what we found when we got there had gone by its own road of escape. She lay on the bed, a spot of blood dabbling her fair hair, a little toy of a pearl-mounted pistol in her hand.

We stood together on the threshold for a moment, and then the old woman

raised two gaunt hands above her head and cried out in a loud voice:

"George Esterbrooke! This blood is on your head!" And then she fell to wild and anguished weeping, as though all the pent-up emotion of her who had served so long and faithfully and silently found its expression as she, sole mourner, wept for the life of Ailse.

And that is why the mercy of the just has seemed to me a terrible thing, and why from time to time whitened faces—the victims of such goodness as Esterbrooke's—stare at me from out the crowd, though to this day in our town it is called the Esterbrooke Mystery and is still discussed.

They tell of Esterbrooke that when he returned he was as one bewildered. It took him a moment to realize that there was one conqueror greater than he, and that was Death. He muttered over and over again:

"I can't understand—I can't understand. There's some mistake." For from beginning to end he had been supremely convinced of his own just kindness. No flicker of doubt had ever marred his belief in himself.

Since I have become old there are moments that I have felt pity for him—pity for a human being who can go through life having a blank space where most people feel the joys and sorrows of others.



WHEN PIERROT PASSES

By Theodosia Garrison

HIGH above his happy head
 Little leaves of spring were spread;
 And adown the dewy lawn
 Soft as moss the young green grass
 Wooed his footsteps, and the dawn
 Paused to watch him pass.
 Even so he seemed in truth
 Dancing between Love and Youth;
 And his song as gay a thing
 Still before him seemed to go
 Light as any bird awing,
 Blithe as jonquils in the spring,
 And we laughed and said, "*Pierrot*,
 '*Tis Pierrot.*'"

"Oh," he sang, "her hands are far
 Sweeter than white roses are;
 When I hold them to my lips,
 Ere I dare a finer bliss,
 Petal-like her finger tips
 Tremble 'neath my kiss.
 And the mocking of her eyes
 Lures me like blue butterflies
 Falling—lifting—of their grace,
 And her mouth—her mouth is wine."
 And we laughed as though her face
 Suddenly illumed the place,
 And we said, "'*Tis Columbine*,
 Columbine.'"

CHRISTMASGRAMS

By Carl Holliday

HIGHBROW COLLEGE, BOSTON,
Dec. 23, 1912.

A. KNOTT RICH, Baltimore, Md.
Please wire hundred so I can pay small bills and come home Christmas.
JACK.

BALTIMORE, MD.
Dec. 23, 1912.

JACK RICH, Highbrow College, Boston.
Wired hundred. Prepare to leave college. Business ruined. Creditors fore-
close New Year's unless money obtained.

FATHER.

HIGHBROW COLLEGE, BOSTON,
Dec. 24, 1912.

ARISTOCRACY FLORIST Co., New York City.
Send fifty-dollar bouquet American Beauties to Miss Allcash with my
compliments.

JACK RICH.

WALDORF-ASTORIA, NEW YORK,
Dec. 24, 1912.

JACK RICH, Highbrow College, Boston.
Roses too lovely for anything. Thousand thanks. Stop over on your way
home.

MARY ALLCASH.

WALDORF-ASTORIA, NEW YORK,
Dec. 25, 1912.

A. KNOTT RICH, Baltimore, Md.
Mary gave me herself as Christmas gift last night. Her dad quoted in Brad-
street's at ten million. Perhaps I can help you.

JACK.

BALTIMORE, MD.
Dec. 25, 1912.

JACK RICH, Waldorf-Astoria, New York.
Congratulations and thanks. Business saved. Your telegram secured
advance of four hundred thousand. Bring her with you.

FATHER.

TEA BISCUITS

By Constance Skinner

LIKE most men with "an interesting past," he had no story, unless it were a serial of the fire-side magazine order: that is, a succession of events more or less instructive (and similar) with no logical connection save that supplied by the name of the hero.

As the Matinee Idol was but thirty-five, with undiminished ego and good looks, the serial was still at that stage described as "to be continued." Added to his natural good points he had a commanding and soldierly appearance. The Idol had been in His Majesty's service, had saved France from the Terror, had fought for both North and South on numerous pasteboard Civil War battlefields and had achieved some measure of reputation among women for the nobility of his profile.

The woman seated opposite to him in the large window corner let her eyes rest lazily upon his hair, which was brown or black, just as the light touched it, and always curly. The Idol had been walking rather quickly in the warm spring air, and one of the curls (which were rather long in front) was pressed tightly with dewy dampness against his forehead. The woman continued to look at his hair until she discovered that she was enjoying a picture of herself with her fingers straying through it. She dropped her gaze quickly in no little alarm from his head to his hands, which he held, after the manner of men, between his knees as he sat on the low window seat, leaning a little toward her in an attitude expressive of devotion, reverence, in short, of almost anything except the motive which had induced him to assume it, namely, comfort.

The hands were finely manicured, muscular from manly prowess in the gymnasium and brown from the sun exposures attendant upon posing bare-armed in the hay fields adjoining the Bronx or on the steps of a chartered touring car "by the hour" on the cliff roads of Central Park for the "Summer Vacation Series" of a weekly dramatic paper—"Leading man and rake in pastures new (a future star at his summer home)" and "An actor in the Adirondacks." Those tanned, muscled, manicured hands, with the steady unabashed blue eyes, surrounded the man with an atmosphere of power which made every woman feel weak in his presence. It was an "atmosphere" that registered high in the box offices of the nation.

The woman opposite to him felt very weak today, and the man was aware of it and not sorry. Anyone who might have looked in and seen the man's face would have been sorry for the woman. It was not a good face—for a woman's parlor. It was a wonderful stage face. It belonged to a Matinee Idol who would conquer always and who would be pitiless in dealing with one who might offer a momentary opposition to his magnetism. Momentary only all such opposition must prove. His salary was evidence of the fact.

If the woman had had any sense of humor she might have likened him to the "little girl who had a little curl." This woman, however, in common with other too, too tender women, was woefully deficient in the matter of humor. It would be much less expensive if women would only consent to take themselves and their idols less seriously. Tell a woman that her love affair is humorous

and she will call you blasphemous; for she is firmly convinced that it is pathetic, even tragic, and you need not think to change her opinion.

On the hearth rug lay a large white bull terrier, who glanced occasionally from his master to the lady with an expression that was inscrutable. There was so much personality about Buster that no other pronoun than "who" could appropriately be applied to him. The naming of his dog proved that the Matinee Idol's alert mind kept abreast of the times.

"Buster enjoys his position," said the woman, in the hope that a matter-of-fact remark might ward off she knew not what.

"Yes," replied the Idol. He was fond of Buster. "As much as I enjoy mine," he said, with a look of such intense drama that it made her eyes falter.

To some people it might seem an unfortunate remark to measure his enjoyment by the dog's. The Idol sometimes said stupid things accidentally, and sometimes clever things in the same way. It must be understood, however, that in the Idol's estimation Buster was a very important creature. His photos sold almost as well as his master's.

Buster, hearing his name, stood up and walked to the window corner, wagging his tail in a slow and stately manner.

"Lie down, sir," said his master.

The woman gave him a biscuit from the tea table on her left. Buster retired and proceeded to make crumbs on the hearth rug.

"How long have I known you, Alice?" the Idol asked, the corners of his eyebrows lifted in romantic retrospect.

"Nearly a month," she answered, with a quivering sigh.

It was the first time he had called her Alice, and there had been no hesitation in his tone when he spoke her name—*none whatever*. He had said so many names, on and off. Her low voice was not very steady as she answered.

The Idol was thinking that this woman must be out of the common since she had held his attention, one might say, love—the love which unmarriage-

able bachelors bestow upon other men's wives—for nearly a month. (The Idol was a bachelor by contract. His future as a stage attraction depended on it.) The explanation probably lay in the fact that she had been wonderfully indifferent. Within the last week or so the change had come. He realized that he was now the greater part of her life; or rather, he saw that she realized it, which was more significant. The uncertainty in her tone and manner was not lost upon this man, nor did he fail to understand its full import. He knew that she did not question his use of her Christian name because she was afraid to hear his answer. All idols love to be feared. In a moment he had possessed himself of her hand—not passionately as a man of less experience might have seized it; nay, calmly and deliberately as one merely exercising an unquestionable right, but also with a long, soft, stifling sigh which told what this unconquerable abandon cost him.

The woman trembled as she felt his eyes compelling her, then rose precipitately as though she would flee. This time his arms detained her. She raised her head and looked him in the face, her eyes commanding him passionately to release her, yet with fear lurking in their depths.

"You love me," said the Idol, in a firm whisper.

"No!"

"Yes, you love me. You love! Oh, how wonderful!"

Again the brown eyes shy and pleading besought him for a moment, then surrendered. The blue eyes flashed their wonted fire as the woman leaned against him, passive save for a quivering of the lips.

"May I be forgiven for this moment, Alice! But—I cannot help it. Little woman, little woman, what have you done to me?"

The Idol kissed Alice.

Buster, lying on the rug with his nose among the biscuit crumbs, did not even blink.

It was one month later.

"It is best for you that I should go."

"No, no!" piteously.

They were standing in the window alcove, and she was clinging to him.

"Yes—dear."

"If you loved me you could not leave me."

"It is because I love you that I leave you. Let me go now, dear heart, and—forget that you ever knew me. It is for your sake."

He drew himself up and looked very miserable and very noble. Only his "Shenandoah" uniform was lacking to make him a perfect billboard at that moment. She clung to him sobbing wildly. Buster sat erect on the hearth rug, looking rather biscuity about the nose. For a few moments silence reigned.

The woman was thinking that it was good to be loved so truly even though the truth in this man made him forsake her. She could not live without him, she felt sure of that. She would suffer forever as no woman ever suffered before. If a hazy question fluttered across her mind, as to the identity of the next leading man due at the stock theater, she crushed it down as unworthy.

The Idol was thinking that the great sacrifice which he was about to make must surely atone for any sins he might have committed. He was voluntarily giving up this woman who loved him (and whom he loved, of course) because it was better for her that he should leave her. He did not ask himself if he would ever love again. This was his big third act, with heroism continued to the curtain. It would have been inartistic to think of future compensation at that moment.

Women love men in many ways—sometimes as idols to worship—as kings to slave for—sometimes as children to care for and guide; but all idols love women in the one way, as attributes of themselves. It is an oft proved fact that men have more self-love than women. The explanation is easily found. The charm and power of the masculine character consist in the multiplicity of its attributes.

"Good-bye."

It was said at last. The woman, a weak, sobbing, jingled heap of bangles and peignoir, lay among the cushions of the window seat. A few crumbs on the hearth rug left there by Buster were the only souvenirs of the past. The Idol, looking very stern, stalked down the street with Buster bringing up the rear. Keen sensibilities made Buster walk solemnly behind his master instead of trotting along ahead as usual. Instinct told him that the Idol as hero of the piece could not be satisfied with any position save that in the extreme foreground. It was a misty afternoon; but the sun emerged suddenly and shone upon the Idol like a calcium.

The Idol was a man of determination and of action. That very evening saw him conclude his packing.

"Well, Buster," he said later, "I've finished; and now we'll go to bed, old man." He tied up for mailing two hundred more photographs and addressed them to the next stock station on his idolatrous Life's Journey.

The Idol was thinking, for the hundredth time, that he had voluntarily relinquished the joys of love because his conscience so decreed. He had given up this woman for her sake. He felt virtuous. Idols are prone to virtue after the woman has begun to bore, and little white unknown beckoning hands wave from the canvas groves of the theater beyond.

As the Idol stepped into the taxi that was to take him to the train, he experienced a feeling of relief which he attributed to the approval of conscience. Yes, 'twas best for her that he should go to some other city, and continue the serial. Buster sat on the opposite seat with his front paws on the sill, looking out of the open window.

"Poor old Buster, no more tea biscuits for you, old man!" said his master, with a regret that was not inspired altogether by Buster's loss.

Buster was not alarmed about the biscuits. He remembered many other nights of emotional packing followed by rapid journeys; and these had always ended in tea biscuits.

A BALLADE OF HOPE

By Brian Bellasis

THOUGH days are chill and cheerless, skies are gray,
And life's a waste, monotonous and drear;
Though cash is nix and I have bills to pay
And owe for everything—bed, board and beer;
Though Fate sits supine with a sour sneer;
Stories with Editors refuse to stay;
Yet—Fate's a weathercock! The wind will veer.
Always, tomorrow is another day.

Though She who once was kind has said me nay—
Our little Cupid dead, my heart his bier—
And the white stones which marked our joyous way
Are gravestones now, our flowers dried and sere;
Though vain the glorious dreams of yesteryear,
Spain's castles roofless, crumbling to decay . . .
Who knows what with the morning will appear?
Always, tomorrow is another day.

What miracles the sunrise may display:
Sensible Editors whose heads are clear,
Relenting creditors, a crisp array
Of cheques, a laureled, opulent career.
And ah—perhaps She'll smile again and cheer
Poor Cupid back to life and laughter gay.
Fate's fickle! Laughter follows on the tear.
Always, tomorrow is another day.

L'ENVOI

Sweetheart, though you and Fate have joined array
Against me—yet you're women both, my dear;
And women's "No's"— Well, hope is always here.
Always, tomorrow is another day.



DORCAS—Not on your life! I don't see how you can ask me to impersonate Santa Claus at your suffrage club entertainment.

MRS. DORCAS—Just think of the honor, my dear. You'll be the only man there.

THE QUEEN OF CHATHAM SQUARE

By Joseph Elliot

LIKE that spirit of nocturnal peregrination that led Haroun Al Raschid abroad in ages past, Adventure ever and anon knocks insistently at the door and commands him who lies within to disguise and mingle with his fellows. The knock may summon one who has circled the globe like a squirrel in its cage, who has become familiar with literature from the time of the Ptolemies to the present age, and developed a philosophy whose hard, bright finish flashes back the wit of centuries; or one who has shoveled the coal of Pennsylvania into the skyscraper basements of New York, hustled freight upon the piers and whiled the evening hours away in the back room of Rafferty's café. Yet, whoever he is, the whispered call garbs him in a veil of romance and leads him to the haunts of his social antithesis.

Roderick Mason donned his servant's frayed and tattered suit, borrowed a celluloid collar from his groom and sauntered through the drifting wreaths of a New York fog.

The East Side teemed with humanity. Dark-eyed Sicilians, full-bosomed Semitics and Teutons broad of hip and shoulder flowed by in gaudy parade, now thrown in bold relief by the sputtering arc lights that sought to pierce the mist, now veiled in vapor, their laughing voices heralding their approach like the lute's liquid notes that announced the exotic tales of the Eastern story tellers.

"Gad!" thought Mason, as he paused to watch the *genre* show. "This indeed is life!"

Red Dolan, shaved, shampooed and

shining from an over-application of laundry soap, laid three dollars on the table at Ike Cohen's Sartorial Exchange and demanded the habiliments of respectability. "Wid a silk kelly, an' all," he concluded expansively. Cohen appraised him with a professional eye, looked over his stock and sent him forth transformed into the semblance of a social butterfly.

Madison Square Garden blazed with a thousand electric lights as Dolan paused before its entrance. Cabs, carriages and touring cars sped through the white mist, drew up before the uniformed attendants and discharged women blazing with gems and men faultlessly attired. The erstwhile truck driver stood for a moment watching the intruding stream of wealth, then took his place in the line before the box office, purchased his ticket and entered the temporary home of the kings and queens of the equine world and the show place of society.

A steady stream of humanity circled the tanbark arena. A solemn man in riding togs announced: "Class A for the Holbrook cup for jumpers." None paid attention. A large blonde woman, gathered in the middle like a meal sack, and displaying an expanse of unadorned superstructure that would shame a chorus girl, entered the Smith-Mazuma box and took her place beside a chinless young man and a fragile girl whose slender neck bent like a reed beneath a mass of plumes.

"Mrs. Smith-Mazuma, wife of the indicted railroad multimillionaire," whispered rumor, and a thousand clacking tongues commented on her face, her figure, her past, her diamonds, her daughter, her daughter's companion and

her family history till the next exhibit entered.

Dolan lapped the arena three times, his eyes extending till their upper lashes mingled with his rust-colored eyebrows. He brought up against a plush newel post at the entrance, drew a deep breath and reviewed the tiers of glittering jewels that banked the amphitheater.

"The next event will be Class B for light carriage horses, not over fifteen hands high," droned the announcer.

"Some dames!" gasped Dolan, fumbling for a cigarette.

Roderick Mason joined the ever moving mass of jostling East Side humanity. A torch flared and sputtered in the damp night air and illumined with its fitful light the face of Preacher Dan, exhorting progressive charity and help from the poor for still poorer brothers. One by one the flotsam and jetsam of Chatham Square mounted a soapbox by the preacher's side, gazed with dull or sheepish eyes upon the sea of upturned faces, then stepped down the richer by a bed and supper. Mason paused.

A light rain sifted down with gentle but persistent penetration. The torch flickered feebly under its attack. The crowd slowly dissolved, till only Mason and a woman remained to listen to the preacher's exhortation.

A limp, rum-soaked, dripping wreck, the last of a long line of indigent humanity, stumbled to the box at the preacher's side and sank its head into the depths of a frayed coat collar.

The woman moved farther toward the little circle of illumination and stood, with parted lips and bedraggled dress, gazing anxiously at the object of the preacher's pleading. Mason half turned away, then paused, his eyes fastened on the curve of the girl's neck and chin silhouetted against the light of the torch.

The wreck projected its head from its coat collar and gazed owlishly about. The girl's lips tightened. She turned hastily away and fumbled in her handbag. Mason, a sense of impending tragedy quickening every faculty, scanned her pale face, dark blue eyes and raven hair with the glance of a con-

noisseur. "A distressed madonna," he murmured. "What a subject for a painter!"

The girl gave up her search and stood in mute but unconscious appeal gazing over her shoulder at the figure beside the street orator. Mason flipped a half-dollar into the preacher's ready hat and reluctantly turned away. The girl touched his elbow.

"You—you dropped something," she said hesitatingly.

Mason took the proffered cigarette case, begrimed from its muddy resting place, and carelessly pushed it into his pocket. "Thank you," he said, bowing as gracefully as though he were answering his cotillion partner in the marble ballroom of a Fifth Avenue palace.

The girl looked at him curiously. "Say," she said, "you're a swell guy, ain't you?"

The spirit that controlled the daring Lochinvar and drove Adonis to his conquest rose up from the reeking gutter of Chatham Square and wove a web of romance about the girl and the millionaire. Comradery reached through the foggy rain and transmuted distrust, suspicion and worldliness to the interest of inter-social adventure.

Mason hailed a passing umbrella hawker and offered the girl his escort. They passed the steaming furnace of a frankfurter vender. The girl sniffed the air and Mason paused.

"Listen," he said, glancing at his watch. "This has been the night of nights for me—the acme of romantic felicity. Things have just happened, and their happening is the essence of adventure. It's nine o'clock. Let's not go home. Let's stay out till eleven, and mark the evening with the white stone of a dinner—just you and I together."

The girl looked at him with searching eyes.

"You know as much about me as my dearest friends," he continued. "I've told you my name, my business and my residence. Let's make this the thousandth and second night—with the dinner a fitting climax to the story. Will you?"

"All right," the girl replied. "You look on the level." Then she hesitated. "Say," she confided, "I'm engaged, and my fellow's gone to the Horse Show, so don't take me to any of them swell beaneries. He might see us."

Mason smiled. "All right," he said. "I'm engaged, too. We'll go to Cellini's, on West Twelfth Street."

Dolan threw his cigarette away. Round and round the boxes circled the worshipers at the shrine of Mammon, while those enshrined talked, laughed or looked slightly bored by the attentions of inquisitive New York. A little group of evening-clothed males paid homage to a girl in one of the lower tier of boxes. The light of myriad lamps glistened from a rope of diamonds that shimmered and sparkled on a bosom that rose and fell as she answered the sallies of her admirers.

The announcer heralded, "Class A for Percherons." Dolan backed against the low guardrail that hedged the tanbark—his face toward the woman's box.

"Some girl!" he muttered. "She must be worth a thousand millions!"

One by one the men sauntered off till at last she was left alone. She glanced from left to right, her face a mask of boredom. Dolan edged closer, fascinated. A man swung by, immaculate in evening clothes. He stopped, turned and retraced his steps.

"What, not all alone?" he asked cheerily.

"Yes, all alone, Billy, and bored to death. I'm going home."

"May I escort you?"

"Please, Billy, not tonight. Jules is waiting in the foyer."

The man raised his hat and continued his walk down the promenade. Chivalry swelled Dolan's chest till it endangered Ike Cohen's near-gold studs. The girl descended from her box and made her way toward the exit, with Dolan a silent bodyguard ten feet in the rear.

A chauffeur saluted at the door and dashed off for her touring car. The girl paced the lobby, and Dolan leaned against a pillar drinking in her every movement.

The car drew up to the curb. The girl threaded her way through a jostling crowd of rowdies. "Pipe the queen!" yelled one. "Some make-up, kid!" jibed another. One of the attendants attempted to clear her path, and in a second she was the center of a seething, cursing throng.

Dolan bounded to her aid. "Here's another one," yelled the gang. Someone pushed him. Ike Cohen's silk hat went spinning to the gutter. The girl caromed against his side. She looked up at him quizzically. "Shall I?" he whispered. She nodded.

Dolan seized the nearest ruffian and flung him back against the crowd, which withdrew to a respectful distance. A policeman's whistle shrilled. Dolan stood like a bear at bay.

"What's the matter?" shouted the officer.

"That red-headed guy's startin' a scrap," said someone in the crowd.

"Quick," the girl cried—"the car, or you'll be arrested!"

The officer broke through the throng. Dolan hurled a bystander into the policeman's path and leaped aboard the moving car before the latter recovered from the impact.

At Twentieth Street the girl switched on the reading light. Her face had lost its look of boredom. Her lips were parted and her cheeks were flushed. She gazed admiringly at her companion.

"It was grand—superb!" she cried, extending her gloved hand.

Dolan clasped it with his fingers but did not speak—she thought he was a gentleman!

"The situation, the crucial moment and the hero," she continued. "Who says that Adventure does not walk abroad? That breath of excitement was worth a year of life—wasn't it?"

"Yessum," responded Dolan.

The girl withdrew her hand. Dolan flushed scarlet. "Say," he said, "I guess you got my number. I came up here to look at truck horses and wimmin. Got the swell scenery at Ike Cohen's. I'm awful glad to meet you, miss, but I guess you better stop the auto and let me go."

The girl's quizzical expression returned. Perspiration poured down Dolan's face and he shifted uneasily in his seat. A gust of fog-laden air wafted the spirit of adventure through the open window.

"Mr. —" The girl paused.

"Dolan," he responded.

"Mr. Dolan," she continued, "suppose I threw myself upon your chivalry; would you be—" She hesitated.

"On the level?" interpolated Dolan.

"That's it, on the level! Would you be on the level?"

Dolan leaned forward and seized her hands. "Say," he said confidentially, "you could go anywhere with me. Why, I'm engaged to be married!"

"Are you?" she laughed. "So am I, and I'm frightfully hungry. Shall we dine together?"

"I'm there like a burglar," he said, by way of assent. "An' I can get away with the swell stuff, too, as long as I keep me mouth shut."

The girl picked up the silver speaking tube. "Jules," she said, "Cellini's, West Twelfth Street."

Wedge between two grim old houses, silent reminders of a social gaiety long since moved uptown, and half hidden from the street by a high box hedge through which grilled windows peep invitingly, lies Cellini's. Only two orange trees and a glimpse of snowy napery proclaim to the thirsty wayfarer an oasis in the desert of brownstone fronts.

Cellini does not advertise. Silence is his motto, silence and service. Even the orchestra performs on muted strings, and so well drilled are the servitors that one might escort the shade of Signor Cellini's departed helpmeet down the long rows of tables without encountering the arching of a single respectful though astonished eyebrow.

The mellifluous notes of Schubert's "Serenade" wafted Roderick Mason and his companion to Cellini's private dining room. A waiter took their order and silently glided through the door, leaving them alone in a fairyland of subdued light, and separated but by an expanse of snowy linen, glittering with glass and

cutlery. The last sighing strains of that famous melody yet haunted the halls and corridors as Red Dolan, aglow with pride, escorted his charge to the public dining room and the place of her selection.

The table is the jousting place of caste. Yet he who daintily picks his food today may rend and tear with the beasts tomorrow. And he who bolts his beans may watch and emulate the dainty eater. The courses came and went. Vanity of form, conceit of intellect and philosophy of ascetic were vanquished by the spirit of adventure, and the diners met on equal terms in that illumined Elysium of interest.

The last crumb had been cleared away. The curling vapor from two tiny cups of coffee slowly rose and joined the haze of cigarette smoke that lazily floated between Roderick Mason and the girl from Chatham Square. She leaned back luxuriously and sighed. "It seems almost like a dream," she murmured.

Mason added to the little heap of cigarette ashes in the center of the table. He had forgotten that they belonged to the far ends of the money-measured social scale, and fought against the awakening. "A dream," he repeated idly. "Yet why should it be? After all, we are but man and woman. Habituated in the garb of Fifth Avenue, you would challenge the women there to battle for their beauty laurels."

The girl leaned eagerly across the table and inadvertently laid her hand on his. "Would I?" she questioned breathlessly.

Mason glanced at her critically and retained her hand. "Why not?" he asked. "Your face and figure outrank a thousand whose daily life consists of bridge, massage and social inanity. Twenty-five thousand a year to spend on gowns, a year or two at some good boarding school and an entree to the social set would fit you for—"

But the girl drew slowly away. "Quit your kiddin'," she broke in. "Me a lady in society! Why, that was my old man you flipped a half-dollar to in Chatham Square. He was boiled—"

pickled—drunk as an owl. They don't make society dames out of such as me."

Mason, having smothered caste with his servant's clothes, took up the cudgels for his premise and belabored unflinchingly the very wealth and breeding that gave him ease and being. "You're both right and wrong," he said earnestly. "Perhaps they don't produce the social butterfly from such as you, but that's no reason why they shouldn't. We are molded from the same clay, you and I; only wealth, culture, a year or two abroad, all acquired, intervene."

The girl leaned forward, absently playing with the fringe of beads that adorned the table lamp, her face grotesquely beautiful in the dull light that slanted from underneath her slightly tilted chin.

"Yes," she said.

Mason rose and paced the room, absorbed in his argument. "And so you see," he continued, "there is only man-made convention—a matter of a few paltry dollars between you and another life."

She rose and faced him.

"Gad," he said, bringing up at her side, "why not? I've an income that piles up about my ears, and the game is surely worth the candle. But perhaps I'm talking too much!"

He rang the bell and commanded the waiter to call a cab, then turned and faced the girl.

"Why not what?" she queried, drawing nearer and breathing the words into his ear.

"Why not make possible the metamorphosis from moth to butterfly—produce a princess from the Queen of Chatham Square?"

"And then?" she whispered.

The lights and snowy linen whirled giddily before Mason's eyes. His heart throbbed and pounded in his breast. "Who knows?" he murmured, and bent and kissed her.

She nestled for a moment in his arms, then sprang violently away.

"Bah!" she cried. "You're like all the rest. You feed me, then insult me. And I thought you were on the level!"

"But I mean it, every word," protested Mason. "I will—"

"The cab is waiting, sir," the waiter interrupted.

The girl hastily adjusted her hat and arranged her tumbled hair, then indignantly led the way down the narrow staircase and out into the foggy night—just as Red Dolan paused beside a refuse-laden dinner table while an obsequious waiter helped his companion with her furs.

Mason, delayed for a moment at the cloakroom, hurried after the retreating figure of the girl, and caught up with her just beyond the orange trees that flanked the entrance to the restaurant.

"I say," he cried, "I beg your pardon, but I can't let you leave thinking me a cad. You have utterly mistaken my motives."

The girl turned and searched his face with eyes narrowed to a cynical slit, while doubt and belief struggled for supremacy.

"Well?" she said.

Mason, with an impatient gesture, waved the cab to a position farther down the street, then drew her to the shadow of a leafless tree.

"I'm sorry you misconstrued me," he said impetuously. "I meant every word I uttered, platonically and shorn of any ulterior motive." He drew closer. "Why," he half whispered, "your good opinion means a great deal to me. I—"

"S—sh!" broke in the girl. "There's somebody coming!"

A path of yellow light shone through the restaurant door; two figures passed between the orange trees and stood beneath the flickering street lamp.

"Lord!" gasped the girl. "It's Red Dolan with another skirt!"

There was silence for a moment, while caste conceit and social creed regained the throne usurped by the wandering spirit of adventure, and Roderick Mason, millionaire, emerged from his fantastic role of social philosopher and bowed as formally as though he were greeting his fiancée upon Fifth Avenue. "Good evening, Miss Montgomery," he said.

"And so, Rod, you, too, have been

delving into sociology!" The girl's diamonds sparkled under the street light. "A night of adventure, with a dramatic dénouement!" She paused and touched Mason's arm. "Mr. Dolan has been most kind to me," she whispered, "and deserves to be rewarded."

Mason carefully selected a fifty-dollar

bill and pressed it into the bewildered truck driver's palm. Miss Montgomery placed her hand upon his arm.

"Good night, Mr. Dolan," she called. "Thank you so much for your kindness."

Mason turned and raised his hat with deference.



CHRISTMAS PROVERBS

By J. J. O'Connell

CIRCUMSTANCES alter Christmas presents.

It is more blessed to be satisfied than to expect.

Santa Claus doesn't know how the other half lives.

One good present deserves another.

It is cheaper to tip the janitor than to move.

Where there's a bill there's a Christmas present.

The kissed girl pretends to fear the mistletoe.

Christmas begins at home.

Presents show which way Santa Claus goes.

It's a wise housewife who knows her own mince pie.

One man may lead a girl under the mistletoe, but ten can't make her go away.

Santa Claus is known by the presents he brings.

The Christmas stocking covers a multitude of shins.

Too many Christmas presents spoil the bank account.

The ways of a bad boy at Christmas are past finding out.

Those who live beyond their means shouldn't give Christmas presents.



CROOKS—Lightfoot was run over by an automobile today.

BROOKS—Oh, was he? What make?



AN unmarried woman's life is filled with possibilities—a married woman's with probabilities.

THE SINS OF THE SONS

By Yvonne Lemaistre

"**B**EHIND 'Le Soleil's' semi-failure there was a drama much more thrilling than itself," Villandré began. He gave the circular look of inspection, the "sign of the cross with the eyes," as Cherbuliez has it, with which he usually gauged the effect of such a beginning upon us.

Villandré liked his little effects, and he was always sure of them, in our case. He found us—*nous autres, les Américains*—amusing, and, somehow, an audience of "us others" always gravitated to his chair whenever he appeared in his favorite corner at the Café Régence, which was often. He had his pockets full of stories, which he told with immense verve. Next to his beloved art of the stage, he liked nothing more than the telling of these, gleaned, all of them, upon the beating, quivering pulse of Paris, and he told them marvelously well. Needless to say that if he liked his little effects, we liked them no less. Most of us were comparatively new in Paris, and we felt that listening to Villandré was learning the universe. And even his visibly tolerant "my young friends" and his visibly superior attitude had no gall.

After this prelude, no wonder we were more than ever willing to listen to Villandré! He had himself taken part in that "Soleil," most heralded play of the century, of international fame long before its actual appearance had been made upon the Paris stage. Seasoned actors, of established Paris repute, had been willing to take insignificant parts in it, to have their names carried by it to the four winds. Its première had been attended by the critics of Berlin, London, Rome and New York. And a sigh of disap-

pointment had risen, unanimous, unmistakable, appalling, after the fall of the last curtain. "Le Soleil" had been found wanting.

The play was a gorgeous poem, that was admitted, but it had missed fire, failed, one did not know just why or where, but failed. Friends and foes of the author—he had many of the latter; one does not ride as cavalierly to fame as he had done without exciting murderous jealousy—had alike felt the shivering minute when the ill wind had passed, leaving blight behind it. There had been but one hiss, but all the more acutely, maddeningly disturbing in its sibilant intensity because of that. That Blémond should be hissed at all! It was tragic.

"*Allarmeau a délibérément saboté son rôle dans 'Le Soleil'—voilà toute l'histoire,*" went on Villandré. The old comedian did hold his little effect this time, I can tell you! *Saboté!* The startling word held us. It is the one by which French strikers describe damaging the property of the recalcitrant employer in the hope of bringing him to terms.

"To this day," pursued Villandré, "we have not made up our minds about condemning him, or simply pitying. It was a monstrous thing to do, if you will, but a monstrous wrong had been done him. Who can judge? Who can be sure that moral laws will continue to rule, in his own case, when his heart is torn, pushing that heart aside as if its cries were nothing? Allarmeau's heart at that period was a piteous wounded thing, pumping tears of bitterness, instead of blood, into his being. Perhaps the only thing which kept it going at all

was the hope, the inspiration of this subtle revenge.

"Allarmeau's heart was amiss, yes, but not his art, I can tell you. At rehearsals, when he would, he made this role the stupendous thing that it is, sending coursing into us all the shiver of the sublime. At rehearsals, yes, so that the blow of this criminal sabotage of his—I say 'criminal' when I let the artist's soul in me speak; when I listen to the simple man's heart in me, am I sure, am I sure?—so that the blow, the subtle, achieved, infernal blow, should come at its hour.

"Allarmeau was then the greatest comedian in Paris, the only man to whom Blémond would confide the greatest part in 'Le Soleil.' If there had been others able to approach it, things might have been different, but all the actors in this drama—I don't mean the ones on the stage—were apparently in the grip of a fatality not to be eluded, and that was rushing them on to its own ends.

"That Allarmeau's vengeance struck the innocent as well as the guilty, and even more directly and bitterly, makes the thing even more monstrous. But that was precisely the beauty, the satanic perfection of it. The most unendurable part of it, to the real culprit, was *that*.

"However, let me not philosophize further after the manner of lady romancers, but come down to the story.

"During the long months of rehearsal which preceded the production of 'Le Soleil,' Blémond's son seduced Allarmeau's young wife.

"A common story, banal as rain, will you say? Especially in this Paris theater world, *qui en a vu bien d'autres, ma foi!* No, this was not banal.

"Allarmeau had never been what we call '*un homme à femmes*'—and let me say, in passing, that for a Paris comedian, that indicates an exceptional type, as well as a man of stone; but that is not the point. He had been more or less indifferent toward all women, till he had married this young thing, beautiful as the day and seemingly virtuous—I should say, rather, really virtuous—till the coming of the little Blémond. Al-

larmeau was forty-five, the girl twenty, at the time of the marriage. On his part, it had been the grand passion, the all-absorbing and all-eliminating love, making all other women as phantoms in a vain world. It was a lover's love, and with that a father's love, a mother's love, all the better and purer ways of loving, all the tendernesses. It was all the loves, and so beautiful and touching that when I think of it now, and of the great artist and good man he was, and then what a piteous and stricken thing he became after the disaster, I could cry.

"He had married her at once upon her coming out of the Conservatoire, and she had never made her début. She had no talent, and she was abominably pretty, and poorer than Job, so you may infer what particular sort of career opened before her. I could not hope to express it better than Auber, a wise old one who knew his catechism and his Paris, has already done: '*Il y a celles qui arrivent par le charme de leur voix, et celles qui arrivent par la voie de leurs charmes.*'

"That particular type of career she escaped to become the wife of the greatest actor in Paris.

"What did she give him in return? Oh, who can sound these mysterious depths of the senses and of the heart? She gave him what she could, what her youth, her inexperience, her shallowness allowed; and I believe that she loved him at first. She thought she loved him, and that is the same thing—till the other man arrives.

"Hélène Allarmeau and her great man were certainly not mates. She was so absurdly satisfying to the eye that no man would have forgiven her for having wit. It would have been a scandal if those miraculous lips had been capable of irony. She was a creature of dew, of velvet, of light, of the morning dawn and the south air, all softness, all woman. I am sure that his genius always remained, in its vaster reaches, a little beyond her. And I am sure that he never perceived that she was not intelligent. On the whole," finished Villandré with a cynical smile, "the ideal

ménage sung with enthusiasm by Michel.

"Oh, how can I tell you how we felt, all of us who took part in 'Le Soleil,' when we saw this damnable thing coming? Had it been any man other than Allarmeau, perhaps we would have laughed. We are rather apt to laugh, we others of Paris, at the husband's little classic adventure, except when it happens to ourselves, in which case it suddenly jumps from the comic to the tragic repertoire. Had it been anybody else, who knows, perhaps we would have laughed; but Allarmeau, we loved him, and in this case not one of us but would have cheerfully wrung the neck of Blémond's son when we were sure.

"By a childish caprice, Hélène Allarmeau had wished to take a part. Oh, the frenetic desires that these parts excited, the intrigues, the protections sought, the influences brought to bear, to secure the least of them, the most insignificant babbling of three lines! Allarmeau's wife, of course, had only to express a wish in the matter, for her whim was only to appear, and she had no foolish ambition to spoil any notable part she could not sustain. But she wished to be a part of the great wonder, like all of us.

"The son of Blémond! The little *misérable*! Imagine a cherubim as alluring physically as Hélène herself—*beautiful*, that perfectly detestable thing in a man, and proud of it. Besides that, a talent of his own already considerable, giving astounding promise as a poet. With all this, the blinding paternal prestige, the Blémond aureole of glory. The eternal feminine did not exist who would eternally resist Gérard Blémond. Women either made fools of themselves or killed themselves for him, or both.

"There was one thing in this world, however, which this amiable little monster of success, vanity and egotism adored more than himself, and that was his illustrious papa. After papa, the deluge! You know—or, rather, you don't know, so I shall tell you—the story about Leconte de Lisle finding Victor Hugo cogitating in his garden, and asking him the cause of his pensiveness. 'I

was thinking,' said Hugo, whose monstrous vanity destroyed in him the precious sense of the ridiculous—'I was thinking what I should say to God if I met Him.' 'Ah,' said Leconte de Lisle, 'but you would say to Him: "My dear confrère. . . ."' Well, this is a digression, but it is to tell you that if you had called Blémond and the Eternal confrères in the son's presence, the little one would have esteemed the Eternal much honored.

"Well, Hélène Allarmeau did not resist. I say 'did not resist.' It is a way of speaking. She may have led the assault. Maybe Gérard did not resist. He was present, naturally, at all the rehearsals. Things marched with abominable haste.

"Things marched with abominable haste, and then there came the crash. The lovers fled to a villa of the Blémonds in the south. To gratify the desire of these two children, two families were disrupted, a great artistic event hung fire, a whole city was stirred; and more than a city, for the world, I tell you, awaited 'Le Soleil' like a god. *Amour, tu perdis Troie!* In these troublous days I realized as I had never done before the blind fatality which attaches to that delirious passion.

"There was the devil to pay. Allarmeau refused to go on with the play, tore up the contract which made him half a millionaire for just this production. There was talk of a duel. Rehearsals were suspended for three months. Blémond went about Paris with a wild look in his eye which was not reassuring, and people began to pronounce the ugly word of insanity. Meanwhile the lovers had gone to Italy, and Blémond himself after a while went and buried himself in the villa they had deserted.

"Allarmeau had been very ill with the shock, so ill that the postponement made an excellent excuse before the great world. The papers printed that 'Le Soleil' was postponed because Allarmeau was ill. They did not add that he was ill because his wife had run away with Blémond's son. None of us, of course, expected him ever to resume the part

when he was well again. Our surprise was great, then—great, what do I say? This is not the word. We were thunder-struck, dumfounded, crushed, when we learned that rehearsals were to be resumed with Allarmeau again at the head. We could not explain. Was it the money? It was little like Allarmeau, that! His fame? It had no need of this consecration. The love of art, then? The love of art is a good thing, but there are certain limits. We felt a little scorn, I must avow it. We did not understand.

"Then came the première. Where can I find words to describe this thing, this marvelous spectacle of art—for it was that, after all—a great artist destroying his own art! It was infernal artistry, the greatest thing Allarmeau ever did, crushing his own genius, crushing the light, the flame in him, with deliberate, murderous hand! Oh, when I think of it! When I think of it! And we on the stage with him were the only ones who understood—and Blémond in his box, whose face seemed a white mask of death between the red curtains. The critics, who had read the play, declared with one voice on the morrow—the poor blind bats—that Allarmeau had not been equal to himself, that here was the first failure of a great career, that the part, contrary to expectations, had been too much for him. No—Allarmeau had been too much for the part; that was it.

"At the last rehearsal, he had taken fiendish delight in making the thing wonderful, as it could be made, as he could make it. Blémond cried like a crazy boy at the close of the last act, and kissed Allarmeau's hands. Over Blémond's bent head, Allarmeau, who was still gaunt from his illness and his woe, had smiled a frightful smile which I had not understood. But now—

"How can I describe this thing, I say? You have all read 'Le Soleil.' You know what the part is, lyric, virile, superb, sublime to madness. And when Allarmeau had finished it—'finished' is the word—it was a drooping, flabby, spiritless rag, without will, without vertebrae, without fire and without heart, a pretentious and hollow thing. An infernal demolition, my young friends! And yet not overdone. It was, I tell you, the most complete artistry that Allarmeau ever showed. It was an infernally subtle demolition, a drawing from under of a plank here and a plank there, which left the edifice shaking in the wind. He gave certain passages their sublime due, which served only to convince the audience that the idol was doing his best, struggling against odds, manacled by a feeble role. At the close of the third act there had been that murderous silence on whose wings fate comes to play that which does not meet the desires of men. And then there had been that hiss. Music for which he had waited! He had won!

"After the hiss Blémond had been taken home hysterical. He did not see the end of the massacre. I shall remember to my death the terrible smile with which Allarmeau learned this in the wings.

"Gérard Blémond had come from Italy for the première. Hélène Allarmeau had not dared, but Gérard could not resist the temptation. Naturally, he had been discreet enough not to sit in the family box in full sight of Allarmeau, but had taken instead an inconspicuous seat on the floor. After the great house had emptied itself, after the final curtain, an old *ouvreuse* found him in an aisle, lying face down on the floor, an inert, half-dead thing, beyond tears."



"HAS he any definite end in view?"
 "Yes; I think he sees his finish."

HIGHBROW PROPOSALS

By Randolph Bartlett

A SERIES of scenes on the highway to matrimony as suggested by certain writers of plays:

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

HE—Well, you have me cornered. Why prolong the agony?

SHE—Agony? From what particular malady are you suffering?

HE—The original of all ills—the pain of a man, caught in a trap set by a woman, and realizing that struggling only makes it worse.

SHE—You accuse me—

HE—Accuse? Never. I compliment you upon the highly efficient manner in which you have fulfilled the traditional function of your sex—to obtain a man to father your children.

SHE—Are you, by any chance, proposing to me?

HE—Not at all. I am simply acknowledging that you have so far succeeded in compromising my good name that when you propose marriage to me I shall be forced to accept you to protect myself.

SHE—How about my good name?

HE—No woman possesses such a thing until it is given her by a man. Until then she is unscrupulous while pretending innocence—the hunter in the guise of the hunted. And the irony of it is that when one of her matrimonial schemes goes awry, everybody blames the man who has escaped, and wastes sympathy upon the woman who has been foiled, when, as a matter of course, her feeling is simply chagrin and not grief, and she already has her next campaign outlined.

SHE—You're a brute!

HE—Yes, I believe we are much pre-

ferred as husbands over the mild-mannered men. . . . So here I am, the word "Yes" trembling on my lips.

SHE—What a strange proposal! (*Coolingly.*) Yes, dear, I will marry you. Be good to me, won't you?

(*He draws a deep breath of resignation and kisses her on the brow.*)

EUGENE BRIEUX

HE (*holding a sheaf of documents in his hand, and depositing them one by one upon a table*)—This is my medical certificate, attested by two physicians before a notary. You will observe that I am in perfect physical condition except for an ingrown toenail, which is at times painful, but not necessarily hereditary. Here is a statement of my financial condition, audited and sworn to by chartered accountants. This is a list of my ancestors for three generations, all of whom died natural deaths except my father's mother's father, who was killed in battle—a purely individual and not a family failing. This is a list of my previous love affairs, in only one of which did I propose matrimony, a proposal which I was justified in withdrawing upon the discovery that the young lady has a weak lung, with tubercular tendencies upon her father's side. Finally, this is the written consent of both my parents to the step which I am now about, impulsively, to take. I can no longer restrain my feelings for you. Dearest Marie, I love you! Will you marry me?

SHE (*producing a similar bundle of papers*)—Anton, I cannot conceal my emotion at your so unexpected declaration! Here is the consent of my parents, and their guarantee, accompanied

by a bond to settle upon us fifty thousand francs. There are my doctors' certificates and my family history. I have not made a list of my previous affections because there was only one, an American, and he does not really count, because neither of us ever spoke of love, and we met only once. I mention it only because I believe that we should be perfectly frank with one another. I am overwhelmed with joy at your love, Anton. Yes, I will marry you.

HE—One moment, beloved Marie. You will be willing to take oath that there was no word of love passed between you and this American?

SHE—Why, certainly, dearest Anton.

HE—It is a little irregular, but we will attend to it tomorrow. Kiss me, my betrothed.

(They come to each other around the table and embrace impulsively.)

HENRIK IBSEN

HE—There has come upon me an irresistible and purely human desire to mate with you, but I fear that, once the bonds of matrimony are welded, the White-winged Aeroplanes of the House of Oleson will strain the links and tear us asunder.

SHE—I, too, believe in the absolute freedom of the individual soul. Day and night the Six-cylinder Motor in the Johnstonholm Garage is purring, and one day, I know, that purr will grow and swell into a roar, and I shall speed away, clinging close to the open road.

HE—I would fly to the heights and view the whole world from the ethereal, starlit spaces.

SHE—And I would be part of that world which you would only see.

HE—Then if I may build my Hangar beside your Garage, we may be bound and yet be free.

SHE—Why not? Matrimony is not slavery when the means of escape are ever at hand.

(He rings a bell, and a servant enters.)

HE—Send for Rector Kroll.

AUGUST STRINDBERG

HE—My hatred for you is the most nearly perfect condition that can be at-

tained by such an imperfect being as man.

SHE—That is simply your insufferable conceit. You know I am far superior to you, and you are unspeakably jealous.

HE—Faugh! No woman is superior to any man. Women merely feel—men reason and analyze. You feel for us what you call "love," but what is merely animal instinct. I know you for what you are—ignorant, selfish, vain, extravagant, deceitful. That is why I can hate you so perfectly. For years you have been scheming to marry me, because you think I am wealthy. Well, you are going to have your ambition gratified. I will marry you so that I can have my revenge. I am wealthy, but you shall not have a cent of my money, not even if I should die first. I have taken good care of that. Our existence will be a continual succession of exquisite quarrels.

SHE—If you feel like that I will not marry you. I will commit suicide instead. It will be much more pleasant, and sooner ended.

HE—You won't marry me, eh? We'll see about that. If you commit suicide I shall tell everyone it was because I discovered you to be immoral, and refused to marry you to conceal your perfidy. Come—let us go find a minister.

(They go out together.)

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

PIFFL—Will you go with me into the Purple Forest?

SNIFFL—Where is the Purple Forest?

PIFFL—It is right here in the Land of Now. If you take my hand we will be in it immediately.

SNIFFL—If I let go your hand again, will the Purple Forest disappear again?

PIFFL—No, but you will be in the Desert of Mirages.

SNIFFL—What is a mirage?

PIFFL—It is a marriage that never happens.

SNIFFL—Does the Tree of Heart's Desire grow in the Purple Forest?

PIFFL—Umbrageously, but also elusively.

SNIFFL—Shall we find it?

PIFFL—Certainly we shall. That's what everyone says before entering it.

SNIFFL—Do many find the Tree of Heart's Desire in the Purple Forest?

PIFFL—Who can tell? First they all find the Herb of Circumlocution, and after that no one can learn from them where they have been or what they have seen.

SNIFFL—Why do you desire to go with me into the Purple Forest?

PIFFL—Everyone must go one day, sooner or later, or else dwell forever in the Country of the Forlorn.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: There is a lot more of this, but we will relieve the suspense of the reader by stating that Sniff finally does take Piff's hand and go with him into the Purple Forest.)

ANY AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT

(They are sitting beside a David-Belasco fireplace, in which real fire is burning, sending out real smoke that brings real tears to their eyes and aids materially in the simulation of emotion. Through real French windows at the rear a real motor car can be seen, from

which real fumes of gasoline percolate to the stage and out into the audience.)

HE—See here, Alice, I don't like the outrageous way you have been flirting with Jack Preston. It isn't fair.

SHE—I was not aware that you have any right to dictate my actions.

HE—That's just like a girl. You keep a fellow running around after you all season, and then when somebody else with a faster automobile or a bigger bank account turns up, you throw him over.

SHE—Then why do you keep pestering a girl with your attentions, if you know what's sure to happen?

HE—Oh, what's the use? It's all over now, I suppose. Dad wants me to go to South America to take charge of his gold mines. I'll leave in the morning. (*He starts for a real door.*)

SHE—Freddy.

HE (*pausing a real pause*)—Well?

SHE—Will there be a house big enough for two at the disposal of the manager of the gold mines?

HE—Alice!

(*They clinch.*)



THE LAND OF DREAMS-COME-TRUE

By Frank Stephens

MAYTIME hope and yearning, Maytime sun and rain,
Brown furrows turning, wide falling grain;
Afield we fare together, where the world is made anew,
For bread—bread and roses—in the Land of Dreams-Come-True.

Purple fields and golden, 'neath the harvest moon,
Brave songs and olden, rest cometh soon;
Still we toil together through the morn mist and the dew,
For bread—bread and roses—in the Land of Dreams-Come-True.

Starlit winter o'er us, red-tiled roofs in snow,
Ring out the chorus, hearth fires aglow;
On we'll fare together, tried and proven, we and you,
For bread—bread and roses—in the Land of Dreams-Come-True.

WHY?

By E. Graves Mabie

WHEN crimsoned leaves are edged with gold,
And frost proclaims the year is old,
Down recollection's verdant lane
Cause and effect march forth again.
Cool, whispering winds sigh soft and low,
And shadows linger, loth to go,
And memories echo in each soul
As spirit comrades call the roll.
Where then and why went those so dear?
How and of what is yesteryear?

Pale wings of morning vanquish night;
Darkness in turn succeeds the light;
The flowers we fancy droop and fade;
In time all things in dust are laid.
From gnarled, brown root, apparent dead,
Each spring a blossom lifts its head,
As like those of preceding years
As tear like unto tear appears.
How fares it then with those we love,
Who dwell with angels, leagues above?

Do they return, as seasons roll,
In other frames with selfsame soul?
Do they the same old battles fight,
In this same struggle for the right?
And winning, progress on to more,
Each victory adding to the score
That must be reckoned with as toll,
When each has reached the final goal?
Vainly we listen for reply,
Asking that strange, eternal, "Why?"



MRS. CRAWFORD (*on the way home*)—Isn't it provoking that you forgot to buy a Christmas present for your husband?

MRS. CRABSHAW—That doesn't matter, my dear. I can get him something around the corner at the ten-cent store.

THE DUAL NYMPH

By Harry W. Ostrander

THOMASIA, nymph of Wickling Well, rose from her uneasy stone couch on the wall-rim of her residential spring, dusted herself with invisible powder—don't bother me, ladies; I haven't the recipe—and betook herself to the metropolis. Phœbus had already slouched below the horizon to stable and feed his dray team and to ask his wife why, in the name of that second Pittsburgh of the Elysian Fields yclept Tartarus, supper wasn't ready.

Thomasia dusted herself with invisible powder because she was going to the city and had nothing to wear. You know this is an old story to fond papas and married men, but Thomasia had literally nothing to wear—not even the figment of a figleaf. Lady Godiva, on her famous ride, had a wardrobe, compared to Thomasia, for Thomasia had no hair. Of course, she had hair, but it was short and curly and would hardly have served for even so much as an evening gown. One might think that, lacking suitable attire, Thomasia should have refrained from visiting the city. But she couldn't. Thomasia had a dual personality.

By day, Thomasia, in her character of nymph proper, looked to the sanitation and guardianship of Wickling Well as all good housekeeping nymphs should. By night, clothed in her *alter ego*, and nothing else, she visited the city and attended to the business of—her *alter ego*. To understand what the business of her *alter ego* was, it is necessary to look into Thomasia's history.

Thomasia—ugly name for a nymph when there is all Greek mythology to draw from, to say nothing of the back of Webster's Unabridged—was the only be-

gotten of Thomas Durfree, sculptor and man of leisure. Thomas Durfree was a pretty fair sculptor, too, as modern sculptors go, so you may judge what a man of leisure he was. Thomas Durfree was the owner of Wickling Well.

Wickling Well is in America. Never mind the State, county, township, section, village, addition, lot and street number. Thomasia is shy and retiring for sartorial reasons—or rather, for the lack of them—and does not wish to be interviewed and featured in a Sunday Supplement. Thomas Durfree called Wickling Well his country seat because he owned a town house also. When he bought Wickling Well it was not so called. Its euphonious appellation prior to his purchase of it had been "Old Gabe Smither's Place." Thomas, who had an artistic temperament, although it did not show in his linen or hair on account of his plethoric bank account, renamed the place and, in order to justify the name, built a wall around the spring and carved Thomasia for its further adornment. When he carved out Thomasia, he had intended to carve out another figure to be her companion, but his other occupation, that of being a man of leisure, distracted his attention so much that Thomasia was left solitary. If she had not had a dual personality, her loneliness might have accounted for her nocturnal visits to the city, although a glimpse of Thomasia's face would have established beyond a doubt that she need never be alone unless she wished it.

Thomasia's face was beautiful, but not classic. It was a piquant face, it was an alluring face, it was a charming face, it was a drive-a-man-to-distraction face, but it did not have the faultlessly regular

features of Greek statuary. Her nose was not Greek, and it did not have that appearance of a perpetual cold in the head that the owner of a Greek nose always seems to have. Thomasia's nose was indeed a trifle *retroussé*. Her lips were set in a firm little line. This set of her lips gave her whole face, piquant though it was, an expression of primness that was entirely at variance with her utterly ungowned body. This dissimilarity, her prim facial expression and the graceful abandon of her figure, was due to the fact that her face was copied from a clay model which Thomas Durfree had brought from abroad, and of which he took the most jealous care, while the figure was taken from a professional model. The discord between the face and the figure was not the cause of Thomasia's dual personality. To account for that it will be necessary to inquire into the antecedents of the clay model from which her face was copied. These antecedents will be given later, but at present Thomasia must be followed on her excursion into the big city. A young lady should be chaperoned at night even if she is invisible.

Thomasia floated first to a tenement and bent gleefully over a little brown baby. The baby was Paquita's, but Thomasia felt a proprietary interest in it. Over a year ago she had upset Paquita's apple stand just as young Tony Perello was passing. Tony thought it was the skirt of his coat which had caused the disaster, and had stopped, naturally, to help pick up the apples. Curiously enough, Paquita's baby's name was also Tony Perello.

Thomasia left the tenement and drifted about the city. Every once in a while she would pause to meddle in human affairs. Strange to say, whenever she meddled, a man and a maid who, before she came, had been asunder and going different ways, after she left, were united and went the same way. Finally, in the residence district, she wandered into a large house, carelessly ascended the stairs, entered a room and came face to face with her double. When I say double, I do not mean her other personality; I mean her double as to face—

form, too, judging as well as possible from the contours showing through a sedate evening gown.

Cynthia Hargreaves, Thomasia's double, should have been named—if names fitted people's characters—Priscilla. Does not Priscilla sound very prim? Cynthia Hargreaves was prim. She came from a prim family. Her prim parents having died early in Cynthia's life, a prim aunt had taken charge of her and had had her educated in a prim convent school abroad. Cynthia was now twenty. She had been prim all her life, except just one time. Whenever she thought of that one time, she blushed—very primly, of course.

The lapse from primness had occurred two years ago, when she was eighteen. Her prim aunt had taken her from the convent school to a resort in the Apennines. The old spinster and the young spinster dwelt there in primitive primness—whatever that means. One morning Cynthia was indiscreet enough to rise early—a thing her prim aunt, who was also lazy, abhorred. She took a walk. She climbed a hill. At the top, cheeks flushed, her lungs drawing in deep breaths of invigorating morning air, she discovered that she really enjoyed exercise. She had not had a chance to discover it before. Exercise was not on the curriculum at the convent school. Exercise is not very prim. Cynthia decided, however, that it was great fun, and furthermore, that she would get some more of it by running down the other side of the hill. Once started, she found that she could not stop. Never having run down a hill before, she was not familiar with the accelerating effect of gravitation. She screamed. A young man, busied beside the stream that ran through the valley at the foot of the hill, looked up and took in the situation at a glance. He stood up, stretched out his arms and, in the next glance, took in Cynthia. Then he sat down with a grunt. Cynthia, standing still, weighed a hundred thirty. Coming down a hill at a breakneck pace, she weighed considerably more than that. The young man, not having the Cyclopean proportions of a lady novelist fiction

hero—he was only human—felt that the shock was more than he could stand and sat down.

Cynthia got off the young man and tried to look dignified, and explain, and apologize, and thank him all at the same time. The young man protested his willingness to do it all over again, which made her blush.

"Oh, I have spoiled your statue!"

Cynthia looked concernedly at a wet clay model, badly dented, because the young man had reclined upon it when he had so informally received her.

"Don't let it trouble you. I would have destroyed it as soon as I had finished it. There is some fine clay beside this stream, and I am like a small boy; whenever I find mud I can't resist the temptation to make mud pies."

"What were you modeling?" asked Cynthia.

"I meant it to be the God of Love, holding two arrows in his hand and weeping. One of the arrows had a broken shaft, showing that it had reached its mark, while the other had a blunted head, which means that it had failed to penetrate the hard heart of some fair one."

"I'm very sorry," said Cynthia. "If I could I would do anything to remedy it."

"Will you let me make a model of your head, then?" The young man was prompt to take advantage of the opening.

Thomas Durfree—you knew it was he all along—and Cynthia spent the entire morning making that model. Cynthia helped, of course. Thomas Durfree helped her hand to pat and mold and squeeze that clay. Sometimes a hand was inadvertently patted or squeezed instead of the clay, but then they were molding over the God of Love. Grasp now, if you can, the cause of Thomasia's dual personality.

"You will have to give me another sitting this afternoon," Thomas Durfree said when Cynthia discovered that the sun showed long past noon and announced that she had to go to luncheon.

They climbed the hill together. At the top—Cynthia would not let him go

any farther on account of her prim aunt—Thomas put his arm around her and kissed her good-bye. Cynthia yielded under compulsion, although it must be admitted that the compulsion was not very compulsory, seeing that Thomas was carefully holding the clay model of her piquant face on his other arm.

Thomas Durfree spent a lonesome afternoon beside the stream in the valley, however. Cynthia's aunt, wondering why Cynthia was late for luncheon, had looked out of the window and seen Cynthia and Thomas on the top of the hill, boldly outlined against the sky, acting in a very unprim fashion. She and Cynthia left on the afternoon train for Vienna. After a brief sojourn there they returned to America and settled in that metropolis, the name of which I won't tell, because it is so near to Wickling Well.

Cynthia now became primmer than before her lapse. Thomas Durfree had confided to her, on that memorable forenoon, that his home town was this very city in which she was now residing, and also that he intended to return and live there when he had finished his desultory studies. Cynthia might have had some faint hopes of seeing him again if she had not known the great unlikelihood of his traveling in her prim circle of acquaintances. If Cynthia wanted to see him she would have to go where she could collide with his unprim orbit. You see, Thomas Durfree did not know where she lived. Cynthia could not well relapse from her regained primness to look for him, so Thomasia was obliged to meddle.

Cynthia was looking in her mirror when Thomasia came in. Thomasia came face to face with Cynthia by simply taking the place of her reflection in the looking-glass. Cynthia was not aware of the substitution, but she read many things in Thomasia's eyes which never would have appeared in her own reflection.

Before Thomasia's advent, Cynthia had been tarrying before her mirror to delay as long as possible a wearisome parley with a certain Mr. Wilkins, in the drawing-room below. Cynthia knew full well that Mr. Wilkins estimated his

entertaining powers too highly to permit him to allow a play or other form of amusement to distract the attention of his auditor. When Thomasia came, Cynthia, although, as I said before, she was not aware of the change, looked at her with some surprise. She had not seen that rebellious expression in what she thought was the reflection of her eyes, since she had peeked into a small hand mirror to note how red they were from weeping, on a certain afternoon, two years ago, on the train to Vienna. Cynthia looked at Thomasia. Thomasia reflected upon the seductiveness of a surreptitious visit to Bohemia. Cynthia thought of the seductiveness of a certain young Bohemian. Thomasia reflected that Quarles's Café was the especial resort of sculptors. Yes, Cynthia knew that, too.

"Why not go there?" reflected Thomasia.

"Auntie would never let me go there alone," thought Cynthia.

"Make Mr. Wilkins take you," flashed Thomasia.

"Mr. Wilkins would have to spend money." To Cynthia this was sufficient objection. It would have been a sufficient deterrent to Mr. Wilkins, too. The by-laws of the Chairwarmers' Association, of which Mr. Wilkins was a member in very good standing—or sitting, if you prefer—expressly refrain from mentioning café chairs as suitable receptacles of additional calorific units from its members.

"Tell him that you insist on paying for your own share, Bohemian style," Thomasia winked wickedly.

Cynthia, whose allowance of pin money from her aunt was small, had a discontented feeling that this last suggestion would prove an urgent persuader. It did. Mr. Wilkins, an attenuated, fish-blooded nincompoop, thought the idea very jolly. From his own point of view he acted handsomely, for he had to pay his own share and he had not contemplated, when he called on Cynthia, any expenditure at all. He was a bit shocked at the thought of an excursion into Bohemia, too. Nevertheless, he stepped manfully into the

breach, even if it was only a breach of the proprieties, and they set out—that is, Cynthia and Mr. Wilkins did.

Thomasia hastened ahead of them downtown and—indiscreet one—entered a certain place. The place was filled with men and tobacco smoke. In one corner a wheel buzzed on a table. A crowd was gathered around it. When the wheel stopped, some men shouted joyfully; others swore. In another corner some men sat around a table covered with green cloth and looked at pictures. When one man had two or more pictures that were identical, he would put some counters in the center of the table. If any of the rest wanted to look at his pictures they were obliged to put on the table an equal number of counters. The man who had the greatest number of identical pictures, or whose pictures were arranged in a certain sequence, gained all the counters. All the men wished to gain counters, for it enabled them to play the game longer. They spoke a strange jargon. "Busted straight," "all blue," "thirty miles and two ladies," were some of the terms they used. Thomasia went over to this corner and stood behind one of the players. I refuse to hold you in suspense. The player was Thomas Durfree. He was saying:

"The time I get a royal flush is the time I quit the game."

It is curious, the various ways in which men try to propitiate what they call their "luck." Some carry a rabbit's foot; some walk around their chairs counter-clockwise; many appeal to the "law of averages" fallacy; others, among them Thomas Durfree, make a votive offering of future well-doing. The small boy shouts, "I will be good," to placate his mother's wrath. The sailor, in stormy seas, vows a candle to his patron saint if he come out alive. Thomas Durfree said he would quit gambling, if he should ever reach the *ultima thule*, the Mecca of a poker player's ambition. Unfortunately for his future indulgence in the great game of "decorate the center and draw three," Thomasia was present to hear him say it. Furthermore, Thomasia had need of Thomas Durfree.

It is with sorrow I record that Thomasia took advantage of her invisibility to "stack the deck." Thomas got his royal flush. Coming, as it did, so quickly on the heels of his statement of what he would do in just such a contingency, he felt obliged to "cash in." He invited all the players to celebrate with him at Quarles's Café, but they were all devoted poker fiends and refused to break up the game when the cards were running high. He was obliged to go alone with Thomasia. She took him by the ear and led him to Quarles's Café and Cynthia.

I have worked up to a beautiful climax here, but I think I'll pass it up. Cynthia greeted Thomas quite conventionally, and as if they had met the week before. Thomas took his cue from her and held it as a man should who has some acquaintance with eighteen-inch balkline. He responded in the same strain.

"Meet Mr. Wilkins, Mr. Durfree," Mr. Durfree did. "Mr. Wilkins and I are doing Bohemia tonight. Each of us is paying his own share, so I can ask you to join us if I want to. We are pretending to be true Bohemians, you see."

Thomas raised his eyebrows in mild surprise at Mr. Wilkins, and persuaded Cynthia to want to extend him an invitation to join her. Thomasia chuckled at the wilted appearance of Mr. Wilkins.

Thomas sat down and took the menu card away from Cynthia. Two waiters and the head waiter darted toward the table. They knew Thomas Durfree. Thomas reeled off an astonishing order for three, and gave minute and particular directions as to the way things should be cooked. Cynthia leaned back contentedly. She liked to have him act as if he was thoroughly acquainted with her tastes. She—this is amazing news—was a woman. Mr. Wilkins's brain short-circuited in the attempt to figure out his share of the price of the meal and the amount of money in his pocket.

They had a jolly time during the meal—Cynthia and Thomas. Mr. Wilkins was practising mental arithmetic. Toward the end he discovered that he was

safe by a small margin. The waiter figured up the check. He gloomily drew out his purse. Cynthia opened her pitiful little portemonnaie. Thomas boldly took it away from her, put it in his pocket and waved a restraining hand at the very-gladly-acquiescing Mr. Wilkins. Cynthia protested. Mr. Wilkins did not.

"I'll return it to you tomorrow," Thomas said as he signed the check.

"My new address is inside it," said Cynthia. Her new address, indeed! She had lived in the same place for two years. "I shall be in all tomorrow afternoon," she added as he put her and the nincompoopish Mr. Wilkins in a taxicab. Thomas exultantly went back into the café and gave the waiter twice as much as Mr. Wilkins had forgotten to tip him.

Concerning Thomas Durfree's call the next afternoon and his frequent calls thereafter, I refuse to divulge anything further than that it took far longer to convince Cynthia's prim aunt of the appropriateness of an alliance between the Hargreaves and Durfree families than it did to convince Cynthia. The alliance was finally brought about, however.

Thomasia! Oh! Why, I regret to say that Thomasia has been divested—since she could not well be divested of anything else—of her dual personality. When Cynthia Durfree and Thomas Durfree, after a honeymoon trip that embraced in its itinerary a certain resort in the Apennines, returned to America and settled at Wickling Well, Cynthia informed Thomas that the replica of her prim face set on a figure that wore a gown décolleté to the soles of its feet, was highly incongruous—if not other things. Thomas, by this time well halter-broke, accordingly broke off Thomasia's head and arms and—well, limbs—and from the torso carved a tiny Cupid, laughing at the broken shafts of two arrows which he held in his hands. Those skilled in the science of hermetics will readily understand that that signifies that the heads of the shafts were firmly lodged in two loving hearts.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

By Walt Mason

IN public I talk of Milton and give him ecstatic praise, and say that I love to ponder for hours o'er his noble lays; I speak of his noble epic, that jewel which proudly shines, and quote from his splendid sonnets (I know maybe twenty lines); but when I am home John Milton is left on the bookcase shelf; he's rather too dull for reading—you know how it is yourself; to lighten the weight of sorrow that over my spirit hangs, I dig up the works of Irwin or Nesbit or Kendrick Bangs.

I talk much of Thomas Hardy when I'm with the cultured crowd, and say that few modern writers so richly have been endowed; I speak of his subtle treatment of life and its grim distress, and quote from "The Trumpet Major" or spiel a few lines from "Tess." But when I am in my chamber, where no one can see me read, remote from the highbrow people and all that the highbrows need, I never have known a longing to reach for the Hardy tomes; I put in a joyous evening with Watson and Sherlock Holmes.

I talk a good deal of Wagner in parlor and drawing room, and speak of the gorgeous fabrics he wove on his wondrous loom, the fabrics of sound and beauty, the wonderful scroll of tone, and say that this mighty genius remains in a class alone. I whistle "The Pilgrims' Chorus," and chortle of "Lohengrin," and say that all other music is merely a venial sin. But when at my own piano Susannah sits down to play, I beg her to cut out Wagner and shoo all his noise away. "I'm weary and worn and beaten; my spirits," I say, "are low; so give us some helpful music—a few bars of 'Jungle Joe'!"



MRS. CRABSHAW—I'd like to make you a Christmas present for once that would please you, dear. Now, tell me honestly whether you'd like something expensive or just some simple little gift.

CRABSHAW—Are you going to buy it with the money you've saved out of your allowance or have it charged?



THE modern tendency is to cover up tracks rather than leave footprints on the sands of time.

TWICE ONE

By Basil Macdonald Hastings

CHARACTERS

MR. ADRIAN COTSFORD (*an actor-manager*)

MRS. COTSFORD

MISS THORP (*Mrs. Cotsford's companion*)

LIEUTENANT HARRY CHADWICK

PLACE: *England.*

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE—*The hall of MR. COTSFORD'S bungalow. It is a summer evening. The front door is wide open. The room is very comfortably furnished and has a sporting aspect, colored prints on the walls and a gunrack near the door. When the curtain rises, MISS THORP enters from the corridor. She is a woman of about twenty-seven, of refined features and particularly beautiful figure. She is dressed in a white print blouse with collar and cuffs, and a dark skirt. She places a packet of letters on a writing table at the right, and compares the time by a watch on her wrist with the clock on the mantel above the fireplace at the left. The sound of a trap pulling up is heard. MISS THORP looks out through the door at the center, and then leads in ADRIAN COTSFORD, a tall man of striking appearance. His hair is turning silver; his face is pale and rather drawn. He wears a pair of clouded spectacles which completely conceal his eyes. MISS THORP takes his hat and dustcoat and stick to the hall stand, and leads him to a chair near the table, afterward closing the door.*

MR. COTSFORD

Thank you, Miss Thorp. My wife is out, I suppose.

MISS THORP

Yes. Will you have dinner?

MR. COTSFORD

No, thank you. (*Feeling on the table.*) There are some letters here?

MISS THORP

Several. Why are you wearing those spectacles?

MR. COTSFORD

Get me a little brandy, and then read the letters to me. (*While MISS THORP*

gets a liqueur glass of brandy from the table, COTSFORD gets out a pipe and fills it. He drains the brandy at one gulp, and lights his tobacco. MISS THORP, who is seated at the table, opens the letters with a paper knife.)

MISS THORP

There is a large package of press cuttings.

MR. COTSFORD

They will be interesting. An enterprising evening newspaper published a rumor that I was dead last night, so Dr. Pinnington told me. I expect you have a bundle of my obituary notices.

MISS THORP (*impulsively*)

Oh, Mr. Cotsford, forgive me, but please, please tell me what happened today. Did you see this German specialist? Did he hold out any hope? I have been trembling all day for you.

MR. COTSFORD

Eh? (*Pause.*) Er—thank you, Miss Thorp.

MISS THORP (*a little hurt*)

I beg your pardon.

MR. COTSFORD

Don't. The truth is, I cannot understand your feelings or indeed those of anyone else on the matter. I am blind, and I inwardly curse those who are not blind. Every word of pity or sympathy is to me like a blow across the mouth. It is not till a man is on the brink of spiritual ruin that he really craves to be saved from his friends.

MISS THORP

But surely you are not jealous of a doctor's verdict. You will tell—

MR. COTSFORD (*roughly*)

Where is my wife?

MISS THORP

She is dining with the Chadwicks at the Vicarage.

MR. COTSFORD

She said nothing about it this morning.

MISS THORP

Mr. Harry Chadwick called for her in his car at six o'clock. You see, you were not expected back till tomorrow morning.

MR. COTSFORD

I thought Harry was sailing for West Africa today to take up that post he has been talking about for so long.

MISS THORP

He goes tomorrow, I understand.

MR. COTSFORD

I see. Now for my obituary notices.

MISS THORP

This is from the *Daily Post*. "Adrian Cotsford was an actor-manager of undoubted talent who was a little too severe in his tastes to achieve permanent success in London, a city with a nonconformist intolerance of masterpieces that refuse to commit suicide after forty-five nights. In the provinces he was adored with frankly ritualistic ceremony, the silver trowels in the drawing room of his Hanover Square house symbolizing everything, from the lordly approval of Birmingham to the raw idolatry of Barrow-in-Furness. Cotsford was theatrical to his finger tips; but he had inherited from his Celtic parents an imaginative gift, which, though sufficiently warm to make his creations original, was so sternly kept within bounds by his acute sense of balance that it would have been quite impossible for him to present an insane Hamlet. It is said that on his make-up box he had the words 'For Hecuba' engraved lest he should be tempted to robe the call boy in a cassock."

MR. COTSFORD

That will do. What is the time now?

MISS THORP

Twenty-five minutes to ten.

MR. COTSFORD

Thank you. Read the letters.

MISS THORP

"My—" Oh, this one is for Mrs. Cotsford. It has accidentally got mixed up with yours.

MR. COTSFORD

Whom is it from?

MISS THORP (*doubtfully*)

It is signed "Harry."

MR. COTSFORD

Eh? Pass it to me. I will give it to my wife. (*She passes him the letter, which he places on the table immediately under the reading lamp.*)

MISS THORP

This is from Doctor Pinnington. It arrived this morning just after you left.

"Just a line to remind you that your appointment with Professor Konrath is for three o'clock today. I am bound to tell you that he is not at all optimistic about your case, where the atrophy has progressed so far as to cause total blindness, but he is willing to operate." Oh, Mr. Cotsford, for God's sake tell me! Did he operate?

MR. COTSFORD (*coldly*)
Why are you so anxious?

MISS THORP (*hesitatingly*)
You have been so good to me.

MR. COTSFORD
Have I been good to my wife?

MISS THORP
Surely.

MR. COTSFORD
But she does not care, thank God!
(*He lays down his pipe.*)

MISS THORP
Why are you glad of that?

MR. COTSFORD
Eh? Put away the letters. It is nearly twenty minutes to ten, is it not?

MISS THORP
Yes. Do you wish me to go?

MR. COTSFORD
I want to be alone for ten minutes.

MISS THORP (*excitedly*)
But why?

MR. COTSFORD
Listen. The operation was performed at a quarter to four. This German said that I would see after the lapse of six hours if the operation had been successful. Till then I have to wear these spectacles. If I cannot see in the course of the next five minutes those obituary notices need not be cancelled. Now you know all. Go to your room, or, better still, go out of the house. Get the trap out and fetch Mrs. Cotsford from the Vicarage. Say nothing to her, save that I have returned.

MISS THORP
But if—if you cannot—if it has failed! You won't—

MR. COTSFORD
Are the lamps lit? If so, kindly lower them. I have obviously made a mistake in telling you anything. (MISS THORP *lowers the lamp*. COTSFORD *rests his head in his hands on the table.*)

MISS THORP (*timidly returning and touching Mr. COTSFORD's shoulder*)
You won't do anything cowardly, will you? The world only laughs at the men who are afraid of it. (COTSFORD *is silent.*) You must tell me. You must tell me. I won't leave you till you promise.

MR. COTSFORD
Miss Thorp!

MISS THORP
I can't be silent. I'm human though I am your wife's paid servant. Tell me that—

MR. COTSFORD
Why this extraordinary emotion over my fate? It is very flattering, particularly from a woman whom I have never seen.

MISS THORP (*after a pause sinking on her knees by his chair and speaking slowly and brokenly*)

I love you. (*A long pause.*) I'm not ashamed. I love you. You are losing your courage because you could find no love to inspire you. I love you.

MR. COTSFORD (*putting out his hand, touching her head and raising it*)
What are you like? (*He speaks very wistfully and wonderingly.*)

MISS THORP
I am tall and dark. I am supposed to have a good figure. You would like my hair. I'm not pretty to look at now. I'm glad you can't see me now—in this collar and cuffs and ugly black and white. But I can look pretty. (*Passionately.*) I can—I can. Before my father died he took me to a legation ball—and I had oh, such a wonderful frock

of black velvet. I have it still. It's old-fashioned now, but it's still beautiful. I should love you to see me in it. You might think I was pretty then.

MR. COTSFORD

I should like to see you in it very much, very much, indeed. Is your name Dorothy?

MISS THORP

No—Elsa. Why Dorothy?

MR. COTSFORD

When I was a boy of fourteen I cut my head climbing a fence, and I blubbered. My companion was a girl also fourteen years old. She kissed me when I blubbered, although I must have looked very nasty. I can recall the warmth of her lips now and the sparkle of sorrow in her eyes. I thought her a very beautiful girl. I think so still, and I shall never forget her. Her name was Dorothy. I never knew her surname. She is probably married now and a mother, but she will always remain my Dorothy in my thoughts. Do you know, most men have a Dorothy like that in their hearts. She may be a reminiscence of childhood such as mine or she may be another man's wife. But she's very sweet and necessary, is Dorothy.

MISS THORP

I should always be content to play Dorothy to a man like you. I could even enjoy seeing you happy with another woman.

MR. COTSFORD

I can't think why you should love me. You probably don't, but what matters is that you think you do. I am not a lovable man. I am hardly ever sincere. I have posed all my life. Disinterested love such as yours will only make me pose the more.

MISS THORP

A woman does not weigh up vices and virtues. She falls in love with a personality, and she never falls in love twice. For me you will always be the only husband, even if I were eventually to marry.

MR. COTSFORD (*half smiling*)

That all sounds very much as if you had the ideal qualifications for a Dorothy.

MISS THORP

Would the Dorothy of your imagination have told her man that she loved him?

MR. COTSFORD

Why, certainly. That is why she is so wonderfully consoling. Did not that little girl kiss me? I never kissed her back.

MISS THORP

Would you kiss her back if you met her again?

MR. COTSFORD

I might. I might. I should certainly *want* to kiss her.

MISS THORP

Perhaps she will come back.

MR. COTSFORD

Perhaps she has come back. (*The girl bends her head again on his knees and nearly cries, so near she seems to the edge of happiness.*) And now you must go, Miss Thorp.

MISS THORP

I can't go. Make the test while I am beside you.

MR. COTSFORD

Dorothy would go.

MISS THORP

Dorothy would not go. Dorothy is as much a mother as a sweetheart. Dorothy wants to be here—to kiss you if you blubber.

MR. COTSFORD (*his voice breaking slightly*)

Perhaps you are right. I feel like a child tonight. I am nearly crying now. It's all very well for men to talk about biting on the bullet. That isn't my nature. I'm up against it—up against it; and now—now that the moment is so near—I should like a Dorothy to be near at hand, if required, to say that she is sorry.

MISS THORP

I understand. There is a lot of the woman in you, and, I think, a little of the man in me. Now shut your eyes. I will take the glasses off. (*She does so.*) Don't be a little bit frightened if at first you cannot see. (*COTSFORD'S head is down, his face in his hands.*) Come now, try. There is a reading lamp near you, but the room is almost dark. (*She raises his head with her hands, COTSFORD slightly resisting her.*) Try, try. You are torturing yourself.

(*He presses his hands to his eyes, and bending his head again to the table sits for a moment shivering. Then with tight lips and square shoulders he again sits up and opens his eyes. He gives a low cry of pain and covers them with his hands. Again he uncovers them.*)

MR. COTSFORD (*his face lighting up, his arms outstretched, speaking in an awed whisper.*)

I can see! (*MISS THORP draws away from the table and watches him with her hands clasped.* MR. COTSFORD rises up and stares round the room.)

No, it is impossible. Those damnable shadows again. Ah, the letter! The letter! (*He holds it under the lamp, and with his head also under the lamp examines it closely.*)

MISS THORP (*hurrying to him*)

Ah, not that, not that! For mercy's sake, don't read that!

MR. COTSFORD

Not read it! Not read it! But I can, I can— Thank God, I can! Yes, yes, I can read it. "My darling Sybil"—that is plain, very plain. I can see the loops of the "g's" and the "y's." "I cannot" . . . "going tomorrow." Some of it is easy and some of it is difficult. Is it my brain's invention? Ah, it is clearer, clearer now. "I shall take you away. Imagine the living hell of a life as a blind man's guide. I know your loyalty, but this would be too great a sacrifice." (*Laughing and sobbing.*) I am reading, reading!

MISS THORP (*in a frightened whisper*)
Yes, yes! But you don't understand what it means!

MR. COTSFORD (*ignoring her*)

Look! Look! "The scent of your hair, the warmth"—w-a-r-m-t-h, warmth—"of your lips." Oh, thank God! Thank God! "I shall come for you to-night. I cannot bear to think of you sitting there and waiting for him." Why, it is fair and clean and new. I could read a hundred pages. God be thanked! God be thanked! (*He sobs hysterically.* MISS THORP has sunk upon the settee.) "Will you deny me now? He is damned, done for, German scientist, or no German scientist." I can see the points over the "i's." (*He is now standing up, laughing and crying in turns, his voice high-pitched.*) Where are my books? (*Moving about the room.*) My pipe? Let me see the smoke again. (*He hastily strikes a match.*) See, the color of fire! Oh, God is merciful, most merciful! (*He is trembling.*) Beloved old pipe, I never thought to see you again. (*He lights the tobacco.*) Sweet blue smoke! Sweet blue smoke! Here are my pictures, my guns, my— Why, Miss Thorp, how white my hands are! (*Suddenly he dashes to the writing table and pulls a mirror out of one of the drawers.*) I have grown older, many years older. They say that the dead grow rapidly. I have grown rapidly. (*Putting the mirror back.*) But now I live. I see, I live! (*He goes to the door and throws it wide open.*) Once again to see the soft sky and the pools and grass! There are the hop poles with the vine yet on them. Look, look, Miss Thorp. There are the smoking oasts and the stout stacks. I shall see the sheep and the great colored cattle. I shall see the sun again! (*Slowly he closes the door.*) Soon I shall see my wife. (*His voice is tender.*) My wife! (*A strange look crosses his face. He goes slowly to the table.* MISS THORP anticipates him and snatches up the letter.)

MR. COTSFORD (*holding out his hand*)
Thank you, Miss Thorp.

MISS THORP
You shall not read it.

MR. COTSFORD

I — shall — not — read — it — what was in the letter?

MISS THORP

You were too excited to understand what you were reading. This was never meant for your eyes.

MR. COTSFORD (*imperiously*)

Miss Thorp, give me that letter.

MISS THORP

If you command me.

COTSFORD (*taking the letter from her and rereading it, this time with feverish interest. He handles the paper as if it were unclean, and the following occasional phrases from the letter are whispered almost inaudibly.*)

"Will you come with me?" . . . "I shall want the answer of your heart, not of your conscience." . . . "He deserves nothing. You can only give him pity." . . . "I have known the scent of your hair, the warmth of your lips, while he has stood beside, unseeing." (*Slowly his features assume an expression of profound horror. He crushes the letter up in his hand and stands staring blankly.*)

(*The voice of MRS. COTSFORD is heard off.*)

MRS. COTSFORD

You must have something to drink before you go back, Harry. Come in. The car will be all right.

(*MR. COTSFORD starts at the sound of the voice and is for a moment undecided. Then a look of cunning crosses his face. He crosses hastily to the left corridor entrance.*)

MR. COTSFORD

Miss Thorp, go to your room. If you meet my wife, say nothing to her of the result of this operation. (*MISS THORP goes out slowly at the right.*) "While he stood beside unseeing"—unseeing! (*He goes out at the left.*)

(*Enter MRS. COTSFORD. She is a slim, fair woman of medium height. Her features are delicately pretty, the eyes large, the mouth small. She wears a motor coat over a simple evening dress and a silk scarf*

over her hair. She turns up the lamp, removes her coat and scarf, sits on the settee and lies back in a sensuous pose. Enter LIEUTENANT HARRY CHADWICK, a handsome young man of slight build, wearing a dustcoat over evening dress.)

MRS. COTSFORD

Call Miss Thorp, Harry. These shoes have pinched my feet. (*She is sitting facing the fire, with her feet up.*)

HARRY (*standing over the back of the settee, and looking at her admiringly*)

I don't think I will call Miss Thorp. We have been chaperoned all the evening. First Miss Thorp, then my father, then—the car.

MRS. COTSFORD

I wondered why you didn't kiss me in the car.

HARRY

People who know never do kiss in an automobile. It cramps your style.

MRS. COTSFORD

I haven't got a style to cramp. Get yourself a drink. (*HARRY goes to table and mixes a whiskey and soda and drinks it off.*) Things have certainly been dull tonight—even a little sad. I always feel tired when I'm sad. (*Stretching herself.*) Aren't you excited to think that this is your last night in England?

HARRY (*bringing a chair to the back of the settee, sitting on it and looking down on MRS. COTSFORD*)

I don't know yet. Perhaps I shall be glad to go.

MRS. COTSFORD

Glad to go to that nasty place! Glad to be an Assistant Resident in a desert! How odd! Only the Resident and the Resident's wife—she may be a missionary in disguise, Harry—the Doctor and some nasty, fat, black people. You remind me of the people who rent flats in town, determine to live in the country forever—and stay in the flats. You're not sincere.

HARRY

You will never believe that I am sincere.

MRS. COTSFORD

You are too young, Harry dear, to be taken perfectly seriously.

HARRY

I would rather you did not make excuses for me. I am young, two whole years younger than you, I believe, but temperamentally I am a great deal older. Have I a reputation for anything but keenness for my profession? For two years now I have known you. Have I ever wearied in my devotion? Have I ever failed you, ever led you to suspect that any other being in the world but you had any influence over me? No, Sybil, you can't dismiss me with a boudoir platitude. I love you in that queerly loyal fashion that many men's wives are loved by their husband's acquaintances. A great many people would call me a cad. You know that I am not. Above all, you know that I am not a philanderer. (*He rises.*)

MRS. COTSFORD (*lazily*)

I love to hear you talk. But please don't defend yourself, Harry. It really isn't necessary.

HARRY (*at the corner of the settee*)

That night I kissed you when he sat by, staring with unseeing eyes, I was mad. That was an indecency the world would never forgive. But you know how I have suffered for it. If you had not asked me to stay I should now have gone out of your life.

MRS. COTSFORD (*shuddering*)

Don't say that, dear; it would be too hard to lose you. You will write to me and we will try to live side by side in our letters. I pay the penalty for my youthful romanticism. (*Sighing.*) I seem doomed to spend my life in paying penalties.

HARRY

It is unnecessary. It is absurdly quixotic to cling to this man who has

treated you so badly just because he is an object of pity.

MRS. COTSFORD

I wonder why he married me? I worshipped him, of course, and I think an actor will go to extraordinary lengths to reward anyone who props up his pedestal. Perhaps it was my eyes, eh, Harry? (*Coquettishly.*) Or my hair? Ah, you have never seen my hair! Perhaps it was my clothes.

HARRY

With some men it might very well have been your clothes.

MRS. COTSFORD (*smiling*)

Yes—he used to say I wore them as if they were a cocoon. Then one of my uncles is an archbishop. That counted, you know. If an actor is taken up by an archbishop he is invited to lay foundation stones, and the *Telegraph* prints all his speeches.

HARRY

But haven't you told me that the archbishop snubbed him?

MRS. COTSFORD

Unluckily for me, yes. Adrian was never the same after that. Then I lost most of my money, and Adrian, theatrically speaking, put me out of rehearsal. But I have got my chance at last, now that he is useless. It is terrible to think that all that wonderful ability has gone to waste. (*Sitting up on the settee.*)

HARRY (*again sitting in the chair back of the settee*)

I hate you to be so flippant about your wrongs. I was first taken to your house to be introduced to the Hanover Square cynic.

MRS. COTSFORD (*rising and going up to the main entrance and then down again*)

Hanover Square! Hanover Square! It seems years ago. And yet it is only two months, is it not, since Adrian had to come down here. Do you know, Harry, that I was utterly miserable

there? You used to cheer me up wonderfully—that is to say, I could sit in silence with you. With everyone else I had to be gay. Every now and then I would be reminded of Adrian's existence by the arrival of a registered packet containing a silver trowel. Adrian had laid another foundation stone. It's an awful thing, Harry, to have to read the *Era* to find out where your husband is.

HARRY

I guessed that you were unhappy, though you never showed it.

MRS. COTSFORD

When I felt a little choky, I used to look at the trowels. What woman with the slightest sense of humor, Harry, could be melancholy with twenty-five trowels on her drawing room table?

HARRY

Did he never write?

MRS. COTSFORD

Never. Occasionally I had a patronizing note from his leading lady—the yellow-haired hussy! She said that Adrian was always too exhausted by his art to keep up a correspondence, or do anything, I suppose, but flourish trowels. (*He stands over the writing table.*)

(*Enter MISS THORP.*)

HARRY (*rising*)

Good evening, Miss Thorp.

MISS THORP (*ignoring him*)

Mr. Cotsford asked me to take the trap over to the Vicarage for you. (*Addressing MRS. COTSFORD.*) I was just going to have it brought around.

MRS. COTSFORD (*surprised*)

Is my husband back? I thought he was staying the night in London.

MISS THORP

Yes. He changed his mind, I suppose.

MRS. COTSFORD (*approaching MISS THORP*)

Has he said anything? Did this specialist operate?

MISS THORP

Yes.

HARRY (*excitedly*)

And is there any hope?

MISS THORP (*still addressing MRS. COTSFORD only*)

The operation was performed at a quarter to four this afternoon. The surgeon said that if the operation were successful he would see again after a lapse of six hours. If not—

MRS. COTSFORD

Then he knows now!

MISS THORP (*nervously*)

Yes. The specialist gave him spectacles to wear. Would you mind seeing if they are on the table?

MRS. COTSFORD

Here they are.

HARRY

He has made the test, then.

MRS. COTSFORD

And if he is not wearing them—

MISS THORP (*hesitating before replying*)

Then he is either cured or—it makes no difference whether he wears them or not.

MRS. COTSFORD

Miss Thorp, will you please send a maid to let my husband know that I have returned? (*MISS THORP inclines her head and goes out.*)

HARRY

I will go. You must meet him alone.

MRS. COTSFORD

Yes, it would be rather painful for you.

HARRY

Sybil, if he is cured—

MRS. COTSFORD

Well, Harry?

HARRY

If— I am going away. Am I to leave you here with him, with a broken, blind man, tied to a disease, the slave of a derelict?

MRS. COTSFORD

Hush, dear. Never have I led you once to expect in these two years that I could be anything but your fond friend. Never in my dreams even have I pictured myself anything but what you call a slave. I have chosen—perhaps I have no choice—to live in the white ice of a clear conscience and to gibe at the warm allure of the world. It has been so since my marriage. It will always be so. (*Sinking into a chair by the writing table.*) I am blind to such a vista as life with you. I cannot imagine it. I cannot hear your entreaties in the way you wish me to hear them. I have arrived at such an acute stage of pessimism that I cannot understand them.

HARRY

Sybil, I am going back to the Vicarage to change and get my trunks. In twenty minutes I shall pass here in the car on my way back to London. I shall see you for a few moments again. By then you will know your husband's fate. Once more I shall appeal to you.

MRS. COTSFORD

Yes, dear, let me see you again. (*Rising and laying her hand on HARRY'S shoulder.*) I have never kissed you, Harry. I will kiss you then. Go now, dear. (*He takes her hand and kisses it, and goes out.*)

MRS. COTSFORD (*sitting at the writing table and resting her chin in her hands*)

Poor boy! I suppose, really, I ought to seek out a super-flapper for him and get him cosily married. (MR. COTSFORD is heard moving without.) Who is that?

MR. COTSFORD (*outside*)

Are you there, Sybil?

(MRS. COTSFORD *turns in her chair, and gripping its arms, gazes, as if fascinated, at the entrance at the left.*)

MR. COTSFORD (*entering and standing still a yard inside the room*)

Are you there, Sybil?

MRS. COTSFORD (*rising and moving a little nearer to him*)

Adrian!

MR. COTSFORD

Take me to the couch.

MRS. COTSFORD

Then—then it has failed?

MR. COTSFORD (*testily*)

Take me to the couch. (*She leads him to the settee, and he sits at the left end of it.*) Has Chadwick gone?

MRS. COTSFORD

Yes. How evenly you speak! Adrian, you are very brave.

MR. COTSFORD

Despair is no fellow for fear.

MRS. COTSFORD

What can I say to you? My heart aches with pity. Oh, how I pity you!

MR. COTSFORD

That was inevitable, I suppose. Now will you please say no more about it? Sit down beside me. (*She sits at his right on the settee.*) What are you going to do?

MRS. COTSFORD

I? I am your wife!

MR. COTSFORD

Yes. But I think it is a debatable question whether you are morally bound to me any longer. For all practical purposes, so far as I can foresee, I have no stronger claim to your fidelity than a lunatic or a leper.

MRS. COTSFORD

Don't. (*Laying her hand on his arm.*) You are naturally very bitter. I forgive you for the suggestion you make, but think! Must I not have thrashed out this very point long ago? You have

always hoped for a cure. I have always despaired of one, since Pinnington made his first report. He was wrong to have ever led you to think that this German could save your sight.

MR. COTSFORD

You have already decided. Tell me. Your decision cannot be unjust in any case.

MRS. COTSFORD (*rising*)

Adrian, before this blow fell upon you, did you ever allow me the ordinary rights of a wife?

MR. COTSFORD

You mean that for the sake of your service and protection only have I brought you here. That is almost wholly true.

MRS. COTSFORD

I met and married you when I was passing through a phase of romanticism, experienced by nearly every woman. Why you married me I cannot imagine. You quickly found that what you thought was love—

MR. COTSFORD

I tell you frankly that I married for the sake of love, not because of love.

MRS. COTSFORD

That is a reproach. You mean that I failed you.

MR. COTSFORD

It was not your fault. You never loved me.

MRS. COTSFORD (*sitting down in the chair by the writing table*)

I very nearly learned to love you in those wonderful three weeks at Naples. Then you shook me off, or rather you locked me up in Hanover Square—if, indeed, it be possible to lock a woman up in London; and you departed light-heartedly for Wigan, or was it Oldham? My love experienced a severe shock. The fire burnt down lower and lower in the succeeding months. I doubt if there

be a single red ember left. And if there were, would you trouble to fan it?

MR. COTSFORD

What did you do in those two years? I have often wondered lately.

MRS. COTSFORD

I sat in a pink drawing room, Adrian, furnished with cheeky paintings by Jan van Beers and silver tr—silverware, repelling suitors.

MR. COTSFORD

Men from the divorce clubs, I suppose.

MRS. COTSFORD

The first was an imitation emperor. He had lost his character in the hay stack of depravity evolved from the grass of compulsory widowhood. He as much as told me so. On the day I dismissed him I lost a silver paperweight.

MR. COTSFORD

How cynical you have grown!

MRS. COTSFORD

It is my only relaxation. In the course of those two years I heard so many protestations of love, so many sensual voices, that I had to read De Maupassant every night before I dared put on my nightdress. One sleeps so heavily after the poets.

MR. COTSFORD

I might have guessed this. Perhaps I knew and ignored it. (*Half to himself.*) *Mea culpa—mea culpa.* Yet who would have foreseen this situation?

MRS. COTSFORD

You never anticipated having any further use for me.

MR. COTSFORD

I imagined that you were content to be away from me. I was happy without you.

MRS. COTSFORD

You were living in art, I—in restaurants.

MR. COTSFORD

And these suitors—did you repel them all?

MRS. COTSFORD

From self-respect—yes. Very few of my sex are actually holy, but we all consider ourselves potential saints. I haven't yet given up hope of being able to award myself a halo.

MR. COTSFORD

You mean that you have decided to stand by me. I ought not to be so ungenerous as to inquire into your motives, but do you really think that you will find happiness in that sort of self-sacrifice?

MRS. COTSFORD

I don't mind admitting that it is intensely comforting to adopt a line of conduct that people—and especially one's people-in-law—will regard as angelic.

MR. COTSFORD

It means that you will give up every bodily pleasure for the satisfaction of your soul? Well, it's just that sentiment that reconciles the poor to poverty. But can you forget what you have tasted?

MRS. COTSFORD (*rising*)

Don't talk of my soul. In London society the soul is forgotten unless Ascot or Goodwood happens to be wet. No, Adrian, I was born to servitude. I will be your housekeeper, your companion and guide, to satisfy myself. My pessimism would resent the opportunity of healthy happiness.

MR. COTSFORD

No such opportunity has presented itself?

MRS. COTSFORD

You have no right to ask that.

MR. COTSFORD

No. I should like to thank you for your decision, but probably you would

find my gratitude as jarring as I find your pity. By the way, here is a letter of yours. Miss Thorp opened it accidentally. (*She takes the letter from him, glances at the writing on the envelope and hastily conceals it in her dress.*) Whom is it from?

MRS. COTSFORD

I haven't opened it.

MR. COTSFORD

Read it. It may be from Dr. Pinnington. He said that he had sent you some instructions. (*MRS. COTSFORD opens the letter and reads it through; a pause follows.*) Well?

MRS. COTSFORD

It is from Dr. Pinnington.

MR. COTSFORD

Indeed! Why should he sign himself "Harry?"

MRS. COTSFORD (*starting*)

Miss Thorp has read it to you?

MR. COTSFORD

I asked Miss Thorp to look at the signature. Why did you lie?

MRS. COTSFORD

To spare you. Perhaps I was a fool to think of it. Listen, Adrian. This is a love letter, a dear, silly epistle from a very dear, silly boy. He asks me to desert you, to join my life to his. He has asked me several times these last few days, but this is the first time he has written his appeal. (*Glancing at the letter.*) It looks very, very ugly on paper. You already know what my answer has been.

MR. COTSFORD

Don't you care for him?

MRS. COTSFORD (*thoughtfully*)

I like his love.

MR. COTSFORD

And you are sending him away?

MRS. COTSFORD

He goes to London tonight, and from England tomorrow.

MR. COTSFORD

You have said good-bye?

MRS. COTSFORD

Yes.

MR. COTSFORD

Sybil, come and sit beside me (*She sits on the settee at his side.*) I cannot imagine why you made so unselfish a choice. You have made me feel bitterly ashamed. Now it is for me to make a confession.

MRS. COTSFORD

Don't, Adrian. (*Playfully.*) Please don't compromise your leading lady.

MR. COTSFORD (*smiling*)

Miss Garland! Poor girl, she is rather faded now.

MRS. COTSFORD

Faded, Adrian! She never bloomed.

MR. COTSFORD

No, it is nothing of that sort, Sybil. Men who tour the provinces, believe me, soon become misogynists. I want to tell you something about today's— (*HARRY taps on the window pane.*) What was that? (*MRS. COTSFORD rises and goes to the window. COTSFORD glances round and sees CHADWICK'S face at the window.*)

MR. COTSFORD (*aside*)

Chadwick!

MRS. COTSFORD (*coming down*)

I can see nothing.

MR. COTSFORD

You also see—nothing. The blind are going to lead the blind, Sybil. Come, lead me to bed. I will make my confession another time.

MRS. COTSFORD

That's right. (*Leading him to the corridor entrance.*) Shall I bring you anything to drink in the night?

MR. COTSFORD

No, thank you. Somehow I think I shall sleep tonight, now that this thing is settled once and for all.

(*Both go out. CHADWICK again appears at the window, MRS. COTSFORD returning immediately. MRS. COTSFORD opens the door quietly and admits HARRY, who is wearing a light motor coat over traveling clothes. She leaves the door open. HARRY comes in, putting his gloves on the writing table.*)

HARRY

I saw you leading him to the door. The operation has failed?

MRS. COTSFORD

Yes.

HARRY

Sybil, Sybil, what are you going to do?

(*MR. COTSFORD appears at the curtained entrance to the corridor, and then steps back out of sight.*)

MRS. COTSFORD

I have told you so often, Harry.

HARRY

And you will really banish me from your life now?

MRS. COTSFORD

It must be so. You did not tell me that you had written to me, Harry. I have only just got your letter.

HARRY

But I posted it last night.

MRS. COTSFORD

It got mixed up with Adrian's letters, and Miss Thorp opened it accidentally this evening.

HARRY

Then—he knows its contents!

MRS. COTSFORD

He knows that it came from you. I tried at first to deceive him for his own sake and yours. Now he knows, at any rate, its general drift, and I have told him my decision.

HARRY

Sybil, I have thought of no other woman for two years. Can you guess what this means to me?

MRS. COTSFORD

I can, Harry. If I have ever led you to think that I could love you, I beg your forgiveness. I shall never forget you. Some day I hope you will forget me. Good-bye, dear Harry. *(She holds out her hands, which he takes.)* All the light that has penetrated the darkness of the last two years you have brought. I can only say that I am very, very grateful.

HARRY

Sybil! *(He draws her close to him and kisses her repeatedly.)*

(Enter MR. COTSFORD. He stands in a direct line between HARRY and the front door.)

MR. COTSFORD *(as he enters)*

Are you here still, Sybil? I thought I heard someone moving. *(MRS. COTSFORD draws back affrightedly from HARRY. HARRY puts his fingers to his lips to signal to her to be silent.)* There seems to be a draught. Haven't you locked up?

(HARRY tiptoes by a semicircular route, so as to avoid MR. COTSFORD, to the front door. As he goes MRS. COTSFORD speaks.)

MRS. COTSFORD

I was just going to lock up. Do you want anything? You shouldn't have tried to— *(HARRY has now reached the threshold.)*

MR. COTSFORD *(sharply)*

Chadwick! *(HARRY turns round with a stare.)* Aren't those your gloves? *(Pointing to the gloves on the writing table.)* You had better take them with you.

(HARRY shamefacedly takes the gloves from the table and goes back to the door.) Please shut the door after you.

(HARRY goes out furiously, slamming the door after him.)

MRS. COTSFORD

Then—you can see!

MR. COTSFORD *(kindly)*

That was what I was about to confess when Chadwick appeared at the window.

MRS. COTSFORD *(flaming into fury)*

You cad! You—cad! So you've tricked me again, eh? You trick me—your wife! Oh, God, what a fool I've been! *(Rushing to the door and flinging it open.)* Harry! *(COTSFORD stands staring at his wife, transfixed with astonishment.)* Harry, come back! I want you. *(CHADWICK reappears at the door.)* You shall take me away. I've had enough—enough of this cunning, underhand, theatrical poser. He flattered me into marrying him, knowing well there was no love on either side. Because I married him, I have been faithful. Because I married him, I was willing to spend the rest of my life as the dog lives that leads the blind. And he has been tricking me, tricking me, watching for a word, a look, a deed, that will convict me of infidelity while I thought him sightless. Harry, dear, your love is real. You will take me away—keep me away. Oh, the curse of reckless marriage! He has made me a loose woman. Man wins in the end—he always wins. *(She sobs hysterically in CHADWICK'S arms.)*

MR. COTSFORD

I have not won. You are going. I wanted you. If I tested your faithfulness in a way you do not like, I am quite impenitent. It is clear that we cannot live together, for you have formed an ideal which I cannot approach. I am satisfied with you. You are dissatisfied with me. If you go, I lose.

HARRY

By Jove, he's right there, Sybil.

MRS. COTSFORD (*turning her face away from COTSFORD and standing with her back to the audience.*)

Get my cloak, Harry. (*She goes slowly to the door and leans against its side, still with her back to the audience.*)

(CHADWICK *hesitates about getting the cloak. It is on the settee nearer to COTSFORD than to CHADWICK. COTSFORD picks it up and hands it to CHADWICK. The latter hangs it over MRS. COTSFORD's shoulders and the two go out. COTSFORD walks firmly to the door and shuts it very deliberately. He then walks to the fireplace. A pause—and there comes the sound of a movement at the corridor entrance. COTSFORD looks up. An electric light is switched on in the corridor. In the passage of its rays through the half-lit room walks MISS THORP. She wears a very low cut black velvet frock. Her hair is wreathed on her head as though it defied the dresser's attempt to mold it to a fashion. She wears no jewelry. Her hands are gloveless. The whiteness of her*

neck, breast and hanging arms is a little dazzling. She has touched her lips with a spot of scarlet. She presents a beautiful picture of sensuous womanhood. When she has advanced a few paces into the room she pauses. Her arms are behind her back and her hands are joined.)

MR. COTSFORD (*who does not recognize her, half fascinated*)
Who are you?

MISS THORP (*very tenderly*)
Your Dorothy—if I may.

(*They advance toward each other very slowly. MISS THORP's hands are still clasped behind her back. COTSFORD's hands are by his side. There is no appeal, no offering in either's posture. When they are but a few feet from each other they again stop, and like two statues stand, gazing steadfastly into each other's eyes. The curtain falls. It rises again, but they have not met. They look as if they would stand absorbing each other thus forever.*)



I COMMUTE

By Mrs. J. L. O'Connell

I WEAR my arms held out like wings;
I commute.
That habit comes from lugging things;
I commute.
Each afternoon at half past four,
With bags and packages galore,
I catch a car with forty more
Who commute.
I always have an anxious stare;
I commute.
I watch the clock with ceaseless stare;
I commute.
I have to look out for my train,
Preserve my schedule shine or rain;
I have time tables on the brain—
I commute.

LA DERNIÈRE PRIÈRE DU SERGENT NOBBEAU

Par Félicien Nacia

IL faut que tu me promettes d'aller porter ma montre et ce bout d'écrit à mes grands-parents, m'avait dit le sergent Nobbeau quelques heures avant de mourir.

Et, tout tremblant de fièvre, suffoqué par la pneumonie qui devait l'emporter, il avait ajouté :

—C'est tout de même pas juste de s'en aller comme ça quinze jours avant d'avoir fini son temps.

Non, ce n'était pas juste. . . . C'est ce que je me répétais huit jours après, en gravissant la côte qui devait me conduire au village indiqué par ce pauvre camarade.

La campagne était silencieuse. L'immense horizon semblait s'élargir à mesure que je montais. Il ne restait plus sur la vallée qu'une lueur incertaine, une vapeur de lumière. Heureusement, j'arrivais au village.

Tous les volets étaient clos. Les petites maisons perchées sur la montagne semblaient endormies. Seule une fillette à l'air éveillé m'apparut au bord du chemin. Je lui demandai de me désigner la demeure de M. Nobbeau; elle me regarda d'abord avec de grands yeux étonnés puis elle se mit à rire :

—Môsieu Nobbeau . . . t'nez c'est par ici.

Elle me montrait une porte toute vermoulue, qui n'était pas fermée du reste. J'entrai aussitôt.

—Qui est là? fit une voix chevrotante.

En même temps une petite vieille proprette, ridée, ratatinée, apparut. Sa démarche avait des hésitations d'enfant

faisant ses premier pas. On eut dit un oiseau essayant ses ailes.

—Qui demandez-vous? fit-elle en élevant la voix afin de dominer le tic tac de la grosse horloge.

—Je suis l'ami de Pierre . . . je viens de la part de votre petit-fils, dis-je aussitôt pour la tranquilliser.

—De notre Pierre! . . . tu entends, papa? . . . Approchez-vous, monsieur le militaire, mon pauvre homme est un peu dur d'oreille. . . . Il se chauffe là près du feu. . . . Il ne peut plus guère bouger depuis la Saint-Jean, ça l'a pris comme ça tout dret en ramassant de l'herbe pour nos lapins.

Oh! le brave homme! Etait-il rouge en me tendant les deux bras. . . . Il riait et pleurait à la fois.

—Vous avez vu notre gas! Qu'est-ce qu'il a fait depuis les manœuvres? . . . il nous tarde bien de le voir.

Et la petite vieille d'ajouter :

—Nous l'attendons la semaine qui vient . . . j'ai fait la lessive l'autre jour pour que tout soit bien blanc lors qu'il arrivera.

—Fais donc asseoir monsieur, ma bonne . . . offre-lui un petit verre de ton cassis, ça le réchauffera.

—Je veux bien, mais il n'est guère offerable encore. . . . Il sera juste à point pour l'arrivée de notre Pierre.

Rien n'était plus touchant que ces deux vieux parlant avec amour de leur petit-fils, l'attendant, ne vivant plus que pour lui.

Comment pouvais-je leur dire : "Braves gens, ne vous réjouissez pas. Celui que vous aimez, que vous chérissez de toute l'ardeur de vos vieux cœurs, vient

de mourir à l'hôpital; je vous apporte sa montre et quelques lignes tracées pour vous une heure avant de rendre le dernier soupir."

Non, je n'avais pas ce courage et je répondais tant bien que mal aux questions qu'ils me faisaient à tour de rôle et quelquefois tous les deux ensemble.

—Se porte-t-il bien au moins?

—Pas mal. . . .

—A-t-il engraissé?

—Un peu. . . .

—Qu'a-t-il fait de l'argent que nous lui avons envoyé?

J'étais parti dans le mensonge, j'inventai une histoire, décidé à poser la montre et la lettre dans un coin, ne voulant pas apprendre moi-même la fatale nouvelle.

—Oui . . . il a reçu l'argent . . . il s'est acheté avec . . . un gilet de laine. . . .

—Tu entends, papa, un beau gilet de laine . . . le cher petit, il n'aura pas eu froid pendant les manœuvres.

—Ah! monsieur le militaire, reprenait le vieillard, nous l'aimons, tant, le brave enfant, nous n'avons plus que lui au monde, nous l'attendons pour nous fermer les yeux.

J'étais tout ému; je songeais à mon pauvre Pierre, je le revoyais là-bas sur son lit d'hôpital, luttant avec la mort inflexible et me disant, les yeux remplis de larmes: "Va les voir, tu les consoleras."

Mais bientôt je me levai pour prendre congé des pauvres gens. Il auraient bien voulu me garder pour avoir d'autres détails sur leur "cher petit," mais je craignais de me trahir.

Le grand-père fit un effort pour se mettre debout, il n'y parvint pas, alors il me regarda avec de bons yeux confiants:

—Je n'ai plus la force de me lever, monsieur le militaire, Babette va vous conduire.

Babette! la petite vieille s'appelait Babette . . . j'aurais dû le deviner.

—Prends ton châle. . . . Ne quitte surtout pas le chemin.

Et le vieillard ajouta en me serrant la main:

—J'ai toujours peur pour elle, un accident est si vite arrivé.

Je profitai de l'émotion du départ pour poser bien haut sur une planche difficile à atteindre, les chères reliques de leur petit-fils.

—Allons, adieu, monsieur Nobbeau.

—Vous reviendrez quand notre enfant sera là? . . .

—Je vous le promets, dis-je d'une voix que je cherchais à raffermir. La confiance de ces pauvres grands-parents me faisait mal, il me semblait que je m'associais à une profanation. Oh! si la mort miséricordieuse pouvait les surprendre tous les deux à la fois, elle leur épargnerait un douloureux réveil.

C'est ce que je ne pouvais m'empêcher de penser en rejoignant Babette.

—N'allez pas plus loin, ma bonne mère, dis-je dès que je fus près d'elle, la nuit arrive vite en cette saison.

Toute tremblante, la petite vieille se jeta dans mes bras. . . . Mon Dieu, qu'elle était émue!

—Embrassez . . . pour moi . . . mon pauvre enf . . .

Mais sa voix s'arrêtait au fond de sa gorge. Un attendrissement la prenait et c'est en sanglotant qu'elle remontait le chemin de sa chaumière.

J'étais seul!

Une immobilité d'attente pesait sur la campagne; rien ne troublait plus le silence et j'éprouvais un réel serrement de cœur en quittant ce pays que mon camarade ne reverrait plus.

Ai-je fait mon devoir?

J'interrogeai ma conscience et il me semblait que c'était Pierre qui me répondait.

Il était à mes côtés, âme errante parmi les lieux où il vécut.

Le vent soufflait en gémissant et dans le frémissement des feuilles j'entendais sa voix, elle me calmait et murmurait à mon oreille:

—Merci! Tu as été plus généreux que moi, tu as accordé à mes pauvres vieux quelques jours de repos, quelques heures de bonheur . . . quelques minutes d'espérance!

THEATRICAL U. S. A.— AN UNIMAGI-NATION

By George Jean Nathan

WHENEVER the subject of fairy tales or fairy tale plays arises, numerous erudite adult minds arise concurrently to deliver themselves of the usual benevolent walla-walla on the allied subject of the child mind.

We learn from them that the child mind is just one little mass of imagination, that it is all guilelessness and lovely innocence, and that it finds its supreme joy in the contemplation of elemental and inconsequent spectacles, so long as the latter possess noise and color. By what form of logic and reasoning this conclusion has been arrived at, I cannot say. Very probably it was deduced by the same acute and triumphant minds that thought out our jury system, the theory that a playwright must "plant" everything in his play and never under any circumstances hazard to take his audience by surprise, the "see America first" advice to the traveling unimaginationes, the Prohibition Party and romaine salad.

By what token of mental darkness these abject fallacies as to the child mind have persisted, is likewise not given me to explain. Very probably, however, have these delusions thrived in the same inscrutable manner that such indecent uniform hallucinations as the rhythmic melodic beauty of Edvard Grieg's op. 46, No. 3, in the orchestra suite from the music to "Peer Gynt," the theory of the birth of the Ten Commandments, the justification of the Monroe Doctrine and the appetite stimulus of caviar have flourished.

What is spoken of as imagination in the child mind is not imagination but

lack of it! Imagination is the power to elaborate the most infecund seed in the soil of prosaicism into the lotus flower of fragrant romance, the power to conjure up dear dreams in the daylight, the power to make oneself believe that the United States is a republic, the power to get soused on beer or—raised to the nth—the power even remotely to detect any real drama in the plays of Pierre Wolff. Imagination is impossible without experience, education, a mellowed heart, a seasoned stomach, a long and broad perspective. The child mind is damp, soft, impressible clay, and never does it or can it create the stuffs of ideality unless an older and more practised mind concretely insinuates into it the basic building materials. The fact that a child takes for granted anything and everything you tell it proves that its mind is one little lump of belief, but never of imagination. And imagination and blind belief (or ignorance) never go together—as witness the American negro, as witness English cooking, as witness the kollege-kut sermons of such clergymen who have not taken the trouble to post themselves on the white inspirational light that shines from Buddhism.

The imaginative individual is one who can penetrate to wondrous mental pictures, who can feel out far-off things and far-off thoughts and bring them home into his own little stockyard without being supplied in advance with a road map.

This is unquestionably the real reason why our theatrical producers take the wise precaution of explaining thoroughly

and in detail the plots and scenes of their new plays in the newspapers before the plays are presented. Otherwise, our audiences might not be able to achieve a sense of even scenic illusion for themselves at the Republic Theater! It is not enough for the national imagination that the program states that the second act is laid in the library of Senator Strickland, and that the stage setting reveals a room that has all the marks of a library. The fact that it is a library must be proved. You must show the audience real books, a real reading lamp with a green shade, a real paper cutter, a real blotter. Indeed, if ever I write a play one of whose scenes is laid in a library, I shall insist that the producer put up a sign on the wall reading "Silence." And after that brilliant *coup*, if my play isn't a success and if I am not hailed as a startling new figure in the realistic drama, it will not be the fault of us dramatic critics.

To achieve the best and most healthful esemplastic results with the child mind, therefore, we must never trust it to itself. We must teach it the A B C of imagination, lest, when it grow older, it begin to conceive and compose such plays as Charles Klein thinks up. Imagination may be defined as the melody that the matured mind plays after its strings have been tuned by adversity. The only rich man in our time who has been blessed with the power of imagination is William Randolph Hearst. One may not coincide with the results of Signor Hearst's imagination, but the fact flashes that he stands alone as possessed simultaneously of spondulicks and the plastic faculty.

So far as the innocence of the child mind goes, I maintain (I am speaking of the child mind in relation to the theater) that it is innocent only as to causes and reasons; that otherwise it is as sophisticated as the average mind of the sap age. In illustration, take some such scene as that between Aubrey and Paula at the close of Act II of "Tanqueray." The tenderest of youngsters will understand its warring notes as well as an older head—save in the deciphering of its fundamental causes. I have

studied carefully the effect of such scenes on children, and I have noticed that the discords of human nature are remarkably clear to them. They know them not by name—that is the only difference. They see many colors, but they are partly color blind. Red to them is pink and dark green to them is light green. They get the shade, but not exactly, not securely.

In further illustration, take some such scene as was made visible by Mrs. Leslie Carter at the crisis of the third act of "Two Women." Still, on second thought, this is not a fair criterion, as Mrs. Leslie Carter's plays are usually written for infantile intellects. This, however, is somewhat beside the immediate issue—the imaginative power of the child mind.

In final rebuttal of the commonly accepted attitude toward this latter, let me concretely face you with your own case. Travel back across the chasm of Time, and, if you are not a New Yorker and are therefore able to do so, imagine yourself again a youngster of nine with a feather duster tied to your pate and a cakeknife in your fist, lying behind a bush in the backyard waiting for little Ignatz, the neighbor's boy, to come around the corner of the woodshed in similar spectacular garb. Imagine yourself imagining yourself to be a Sioux brave ready to scalp little Ignatz, who imagines himself to be a Mohican warrior. And then tell me if—on that distant day—you actually imagined anything. You did not! What you did was nothing more than to make yourself up (so far as the kitchen utensils permitted you) to look like some Indian or picture of an Indian you had previously seen, and to disport yourself after the manner of the redmen in the Wild West show. You imagined nothing. You were you; Ignatz was Ignatz. The fact that you were "playing Indian" did not cause you to imagine you were an Indian any more than the subsequent tumbling to the ground of little Ignatz upon your shout, "You're dead!" caused you to imagine for one moment that little Ignatz had shuffled off this mortal coil.

This excitement and turmoil in my usually pacific vocabulary has been brought about by the production by Mr. Winthrop Ames of the fairy tale play "SNOW WHITE"—a fairy tale not less dear to the hearts of children than that other popular fairy tale concerning the great wisdom and sense of justice that were exhibited in '61 by the powers at Washington in dividing a nation against itself and murdering several hundred thousand Christians so that a mob of erstwhile perfectly satisfied niggers might go swaggering through the streets and show up to the world the splendid joke of the equality clause in the Constitution. The production of "SNOW WHITE" reveals imagination in the staging of the pictures of the throne room in wicked Queen Brangomar's palace, but beyond these it is cold and deliberately real, of mohair rather than chiffon, of stolid Unitt and Wickes paint brushes rather than the fleeting stuff of pasteled dreams. Children will enjoy it—that it were futile to deny; yet it seems a bit sad to me that the inchoative imagination of the theater-going race of tomorrow may not be nurtured and cultivated more adroitly, more satisfactorily, more artistically, more securely. "SNOW WHITE," in conclusion, although it here misses the same illusion in proscenium exhibit, is nevertheless a much better fairy tale play than, say, "The Case of Becky."

The theme of "HAWTHORNE OF THE U. S. A.," a George M. Cohan revision of the J. B. Fagan text, is as follows: Hooray hooray I'm a Star-Spangled kiddo clear the way don't get gay I'm the guy oh my who putt the english on English I'm right there have a care—take that, you dog!—and that!!—I'm a great big gun U. S. A. Number One oh the land of the free and the home of the brave Dewey Grant and R. E. Lee Roosevelt and little Me—good morning, Kink!—hooray hurrah we can lick the world when our flag's unfurled hurrah hooray biff bang biff everyone's a great big stiff unless and this is true he is red white and blue!

In other words, the exhibit reveals the manner in which young Americans,

when they go abroad, immediately ride up to the palace, push aside the three hundred heavily armed guards, tell the king just where he gets off and make the beautiful blonde princess sick of the wooing of Duke Adolph and eager to tie up with a REAL man. Nietzsche, in "Die Fröliche Wissenschaft," endorsed the basic spirit that breeds such material—the spirit that rejoices in smashing the cosmos on the jaw; Voltaire, too, bequeathed a "good notice" with his assertion that infidel youth should be applauded when it walked up to crowned age and spat in its visage; and did not Napoleon say, "Nothing more exalts the courage and energy of a great people than the danger they affront in preserving the sacred independence of their country?"

Surely, here is approbation, justification, exculpation enough! Go you and sit you in attendance upon "HAWTHORNE." You will have a large evening; you will laugh until your jowls do ache you; you will leave the playhouse when the curtain falls and remark grandiosely and with much condescension unto your neighbor, "Silly, my boy, very very silly"; and all the while, way down deep in your American heart, you will recognize and realize that Hawthorne is the spirit of America, exaggerated to be sure, but the spirit just the same. Of course you would not dare admit this out loud, because then your neighbor might think you were born of poor parents and that you do not own a dress suit and that the headwaiter at the Waldorf doesn't know you and that you don't know which is the ice cream fork. And of course that would never do! If I were asked to describe the exhibit gravely in a couple of phrases, I should say it was the sort of play that G. W. Dillingham & Co. love so to novelize or the kind of play George Barr McCutcheon might write seriously. Mr. Douglas Fairbanks, that most likable gymnast, is the performer who agreeably puts the haw-haw in Hawthorne.

In the seventeenth century, when the Church insisted that all diseases could be cured by the dead saints, St. Valen-

tine, as Robert G. Ingersoll has told you, was relied on to cure epilepsy, St. Gervasius rheumatism, St. Michael cancer, St. Judas catarrh and whooping cough, St. Ovidius deafness, St. Sebastian snakebites, St. Apollonia toothache, St. Clara astigmatism and St. Hubert hydrophobia. In this twentieth century, the dead saints are similarly the only refuge for such plays as intelligent communities have found diseased, sick, languishing and decrepit. Accordingly, I recommend James Forbes's "A RICH MAN'S SON," Frederic Chapin's "C.O.D." and Elmer Harris's "TRIAL MARRIAGE" to the care of St. Paul, St. Louis and St. Joe, Missouri. The author of the first of these products committed the recurring mistake of confusing vulgarity with democracy. In all seriousness, furthermore, he indulged his colloquial characters in such superbly verisimilistic verbiage as "Extricate me from this predicament." The author of the second of these sought to create a farce and succeeded in achieving a Chicago musical show minus the music. His derivation of humor, however, was fresh, novel and appetizing. Let me quote several of the best and most unconventional specimens:

I.

MR. DRUDGE—When I see that man Hiram Jones, you bet I'll tell him what I think of him!
(MR. DRUDGE turns round, observes HIRAM, who has been behind him all the while, and meekly slinks away.)

II.

MR. DARLINGTON (to FARMER JONES)—No, sir, I absolutely refuse to pitch hay for you!
(FARMER JONES points a revolver at MR. DARLINGTON.)

MR. DARLINGTON—Oh, I was just fooling. I felt like pitching hay all the time!

III.

MRS. DUSENBERRY (a moment after drinking a glass of blackberry brandy)—He-he-he! I feel all creepy inside. He-he-he! (Whereupon MRS. DUSENBERRY becomes instantaneously and gigglingly pie-eyed.)

IV.

MR. DARLINGTON, in a spirit of camaraderie, slaps Mr. Drudge on his sore, sunburnt back.

V.

MR. DRUDGE—The skin's all burned off my back.

MR. DARLINGTON—That oughtn't to bother you. You're good at skin games.

VI.

MR. DARLINGTON (to MR. DUSENBERRY, who is playing a ragtime tune on the piano)—What is that you're playing, Dusenberry?

MR. DUSENBERRY—The piano.

VII.

MR. DARLINGTON (to MR. DRUDGE, who is almost entirely bald)—Why don't you brush your hair?

MR. DRUDGE—Which one?

And the author of the third of these products put the title "Trial Marriage" on the first page of his play manuscript, and then went ahead and wrote a sex get-together of the vintage of 1845 that had about as much connection with trial marriage as a room in the Hotel Gerard. Miss Helen Ware undoubtedly selected the play because it provided her with one of those second act climaxes in which she could pound and bawl and bellow against the door that had just closed on her lover. Miss Ware would seem to be as deeply enamored of this dramatic episode, judging from her numerous copings with it in the last four years, as Mr. John Mason is fond of expressing intense subdued emotion by fixing his gaze hard on his finger nails, and as Mr. Robert Hilliard is fond of indicating deep contemplation and meditation by stroking his back hair with the palm of his hand.

"THE ARGYLE CASE," in which Mr. Hilliard is this season appearing, is about No. 27,852,621 in the series of detective tales in which the murdered man's body has been discovered in the library. I have wondered and speculated in print for many years as to the mysterious circumstance that causes men invariably to be murdered in libraries. It baffles me—me who, while watching one of her heated and rapid dramatic scenes, once even succeeded in figuring out just what Nazimova was talking about! That the body of the murdered man should never be discovered on the floor of the pantry or along-

side the case of Anheuser-Busch in the cellar, but always on the floor of the library, is, I suppose, an occult problem that must take its place with such allied fiction enigmas as the inevitable heroic qualities and sturdiness of all poor young men from west of Oak Park, Ill. (as opposed to the bloodless, spineless qualities of all rich characters from New York), the naming of all bachelors either Travers or young Winthrop, the complete villainy and vindictiveness of all Spaniards, the telltale glove that Lady Aubrey Manners never drops anywhere save in Hilary Ardale's bachelor quarters and the mystery as to how heroes always manage to retain their becoming sunburn in winter.

The moment I glanced at my program and caught "Act I. Scene: Mr. Argyle's Library," I realized even before the curtain lifted that, following the rest of the rules of the D. P. U. (Detective Play Union), one would be able to distinguish the detective in this exhibit by virtue of the fact that he would always have a cigar in his mouth, that the detective would in the end marry the girl who always wears a white dress in the first act, that the detective in the big scene would nonplus the criminals in their den by his peerless *savoir-faire* and elegant coolness, and that somewhere in one of the stage sets there would be visible something that would look like a simple bookcase but that would in reality have a secret back in which something was hidden.

I was not destined to be disappointed. The truth is that this play by Harriet Ford and Harvey O'Higgins, edited by my good comrade William J. Burns, is little else than the venerable "Queen of the Counterfeiters" with a dictagraph. Beyond the highly interesting employment of this recent invention, the devices and stratagems of Asche Kayton, the amplitudinous ferret, are naïve and unshaved. The finger print clue business, utilized here with much conscious show and ado, harks back to the distant day of "The Octoroon." In short, Kayton gave me the resident impression of succeeding finally in solving the Argyle mystery only by having been told

the plot of the play in advance. Mr. Burns is a man of so great fertility, so keen a grasp on the dramatic phases of his profession and so vivid an imagination, that he deserved sharper and more pertinent collaborators—a Paul Armstrong or a Wilson Mizner or a William Gillette, or, I venture, a Bayard Veiller. In the long nights of our happy companionship he has outlined to me fully a dozen amazingly ingenious detective themes and artful expanding strategies and finesse that literally cry for an able recording pen. Here and there in "THE ARGYLE CASE" are flickerings of his prime inventive skill—but only flickerings. The best performance in the exhibit is that of Mr. Gustav Von Seyffertitz as the master counterfeiter Kreisler.

"OUR WIVES," from the German of Ludwig Fulda by Helen Krafft and Frank Mandel. A comedy with more genuine humanness and less rank manuscript smell, more arousing sal-volatile, more stimulating sesqui-carbonate of ammonia and less carbonic acid gas in it than any number of theatrical jabber-puddings and pucerons mislabeled comedies. A comedy of the melancholy of life and love, whose characters carry live hearts and minds in such parts of their bodies as are more frequently in other dramatic cases occupied by roberthickens and henribatailles. A comedy so authentic and heterodox in its prying psychology, so searching in its profane moods that, very naturally, much of sagacious New York immediately declared it to be artificial. With a first and third act of clear joyousness, and a middle act suffering from the base Teutonic machine playwrighting practice of twos and twos, couples and couples, we penetrate here, despite undeniable destitutions and shortcomings, into acrid, grinning, tear getting, bosom enlarging material.

I shall merely suggest the surface of the tale. Four bachelors—close friends—"We will never marry!"—female bang—down goes Martin—female bang—down goes Lyon—female bang—down goes Tatum. Bowers left alone—"We won't desert you, though; we'll keep up our friendships just the same after we're

married!" — Bowers smiles — Bowers knows—days come, days go—and Bowers still alone. "That's the way," sighs Bowers, "but *I*—but *I* shall never make the mistake they have made. Look at poor old Martin and poor dear old Lyon and poor, good old Tatum; look what marriage has done to them!" Then, suddenly—female bang, and down goes Bowers. "But we thought you didn't believe in marriage—in our getting married!" protest Martin and Lyon and Tatum. Bowers looks at them with condescending and pitying mien. "Oh," he explains, "my case is entirely different!"

Here is only one vagrant chord in the *motif*. There is another and yet another and still another sounding the manner in which passion and love and sympathy breathe themselves into the infidel souls of unborn melodies and create the spiritual life that slumbers within them. And so I say that, admitting a thousand and one awful splotches of soot on its nose, "OUR WRIVES" still has holy intestines. The piece has been staged admirably by Mr. Robert Milton (the staging approaches, indeed, to Mr. Belasco's suave and excellent work with "The Concert") and it is very badly acted save in the instances of Mr. Henry Kolker, Mr. John Findlay and Miss Pamela Gaythorne.

I.

QUESTION—What is a piece of plain red cloth nine feet long and three feet wide?

ANSWER—It is a river silvered by the Oriental moon rippling lazily toward the open sea.

II.

QUESTION—What is a fishing pole?

ANSWER—It is a weeping willow tree brilliant green in the golden sunlight of Love's warm young afternoon.

III.

QUESTION—What is a crimson pin-cushion?

ANSWER—It is the gory head of a lewd villain slain in swordy battle.

If you do not believe me, go you see "THE YELLOW JACKET," a Chinese manifestation presented in the Chinese manner; by George C. Hazelton and J. H. Benrimo. A luscious orgy, a Roman bachelor dinner, a boozy bacchanal, an immoral and unchaste spree of the imagination is here. No "realism" rubbish; no ambassadors to China to fetch back painfully authentic rice or equally painful, if equally authentic, architects' drawings of the window in the bathroom of the palace wherewith to create the press agent wind called "atmosphere"! No ransacking of antique shops to persuade the native attending hoddody-doddies, the native numps, loobies and beetleheads that Shakespeare might have been the equal of even some of our modern American playwrights if only he had looked more closely after his scenery! Jolly stuff, this "YELLOW JACKET"—the stuff o' dreams, the stuff wherewith to develop the bust of the American imagination that too long has been R. and G'd, that too long has been tightly corseted. To Messrs. Harris and Selwyn, a pioneering brace of producers, my compliments. A Merry Christmas to you, gentlemen—and a full stocking!

Mr. William Faversham's production of "JULIUS CÆSAR," simply and tastefully mounted from designs by Sir Alma Tadema, and intelligently enacted by Mr. Fuller Mellish as Julius, Mr. Tyrone Power as Marcus B., Mr. Berton Churchill as Casca, Miss Opp as Portia and less intelligently by Mr. Frank Keenan as Cassius, stands a fine laurel to the justifiable ambitions of its sponsor. Mr. Faversham's Antony is an excellent piece of endeavor, and his individual performance, together with the solidity of his present enterprise, again emphasizes the fact that he is a gentleman and scholar of whom the theater of his adopted tabernacle may well be proud. A sentence of hysterical eulogy is due the mob in the current exhibit. It comes as agreeable relief to observe the Forum peopled with individuals who look less than usual like lavender-legged chorus youngers and more like Applan thick-necks, less like misbegotten haber-

dashers' clerks and more like Roman bull-stomachs.

I will now give you a scene from the play in which William Collier, his wife (Miss Paula Marr) and his son ("Buster" Collier) will appear in 1920:

MISS MARR—What is your name?

MR. COLLIER (*with a worried look*)—Charles Weller.

MISS MARR—Are you well?

MR. COLLIER—No, Weller.

MISS MARR—Not your name! Your health?

MR. COLLIER (*with a worried look*)—Well—er—I'm sicker.

MISS MARR (*to the others*)—Let's now sit down at the tea table. (*To MR. COLLIER, graciously*) Charles first.

MR. COLLIER—That makes me feel like a king.

MISS MARR (*coquettishly*)—What kind of a king?

MR. COLLIER (*glancing at his coat*)—A Browning-King.

MISS MARR—Will you have some bread?

MR. COLLIER (*still with a worried look*)—Some what?

MISS MARR—Some staff of life.

MR. COLLIER (*more worried*)—You can put me on your staff for life!

MISS MARR—Then you love me?

MR. COLLIER—No, I just hate you!

MISS MARR—But I am engaged to another, a rich duke.

MR. COLLIER (*even more worried*)—That's all right. Wait until ten minutes of eleven!

(*Exit MISS MARR. Enter BUSTER.*)

MR. COLLIER—Hello, Buster. What's your last name?

BUSTER—Smith!

MR. COLLIER (*still even more worried*)—Blacksmith or cough drops?

BUSTER—I like you.

MR. COLLIER—Why do you like me?

BUSTER—Because you look like my dog Henry.

MISS MARR (*reëntering*)—Are you still 'round?

MR. COLLIER (*looking terribly worried*)—Yes, but I'm getting thinner, thanks.

MISS MARR—Tell me some good stories.

MR. COLLIER—The sixteenth and seventeenth floors of the Singer Building.

MISS MARR—Your badinage is euphuistically Hudibrastic.

MR. COLLIER—Stop calling me names!

MISS MARR (*displaying her Parisian gown*)—Do you like French dressing?

MR. COLLIER (*worried*)—On salad!

MISS MARR—Do you like salad?

MR. COLLIER—Lettuce get to it, eh, Buster?

BUSTER—Yescarole!

MR. COLLIER (*to MISS MARR*)—It's getting on eleven. Will you marry me?

MISS MARR—If I marry you—what then?

MR. COLLIER (*more worried-looking than ever*)—We'll enjoy a long life and a marry one. (*Kissing her*) Hurry up! We've just got two

minutes to leave London, get to Liverpool and catch the boat for Broadway!

CURTAIN.

This play last year was called "Take My Advice." The year before last it was called "I'll Be Hanged If I Do." This year it is called "NEVER SAY DIE." It is always the same, except the title—and Mr. Collier's new evening waistcoat. That people laugh every year in spite of this play is the regular tribute they pay to the considerable ability of Mr. Collier as a comedian.

"LITTLE WOMEN," a nicely staged dramatization of the familiar Alcott fiction. A delight to auld lang syne sentimentalists who, in their childhood, preferred such reading as "Money is a needful and precious thing, but I'd rather see my girls poor men's wives, if they were happy and contented, than queens on thrones without self-respect and peace" to "Bang! Bang!! Bang!!! Thirty-seven dastardly bandits bit the dust as Gold-Toothed Gus's ever ready gun spoke across the deep ravine!" The piece is very ably presented by a carefully selected aggregation of elocutionists and— Financial note: It is making lots of money.

"THE BLINDNESS OF VIRTUE." Cosmo 'Amilton's paraphrase of Wedekind's "Frühlings Erwachen," thus:

HUSBAND—We know nothing of Effie's mind on this point. We only know that she is seventeen, and that she is a very healthy girl. She has, whether she knows it or not, the maternal instinct. Has it ever occurred to you to speak to her?

WIFE—It has never come into my mind. Why should I? My mother never spoke to me. All women brought up as I've been brought up have too great a sense of modesty ever to consider the possibility of discussing such things as these with young unmarried girls. It is part of our training. It is inbred in us. We found out the truth for ourselves; our daughters must do the same. Our sense of delicacy is all against the discussion of such a dreadfully personal matter. It isn't done.

There is, however, a honeyed Anglo-Saxon, instead of the true bitter Teutonic, final curtain.

Music shows. The Ziegfeld "FOLLIES"—a refulgent assemblage of savory and shapely minxes, blonde and brunette, dressed and undressed, moving

majestically among Harry B. Smith's words, Raymond Hubbell's tunes and Ernest Albert's scenery. "THE DOVE OF PEACE"—musicianly melodies by Herr Walter Damrosch contradicted by an astonishingly inept book from the erstwhile facile studio of Will Irwin's brother. "THE LADY OF THE SLIPPER"—Montgomery and versatile Stone, Elsie Janis and Lydia Lopoukova dancing merrily to Victor Herbert insinuating tunes. On with the dance; let the libretto be not unconfined! "THE RED PETTICOAT"—Helen Lowell in a symphonious version of Rida Johnson Young's dispirited farce "Next." "THE GYPSY"—a Pixley and Luders rendition of a very ill "Trovatore." "BROADWAY TO PARIS"—a gleesome and polychromatic Winter Garden pasticcio of drumscymbalslegsmorelegsdittiesandstillmorelegs rendered adscititiously pleasurable through the suppression for all but half an hour of gertrude hoffmann. "ROLY POLY"—Monsieur Weber, Monsieur Fields, Mademoiselle Dressler et cinquante chemisettes dans un melange von Scherzen und Truthahn-Trotten to say nothing of we'll-spoon-lalala-in-June-lalala - in - tune - lalala - with - the - moon-lalala and others like it by E. Ray Goetz and Baldwin Sloane. Gamesome entertainment on the whole, however.

Comes "THE HIGH ROAD," by Edward Sheldon, an undistinguished proscenium offering loaned an air of mealy-mouthed, coxcomical importance through characters labeled "the Governor of New York," "the next President of the United States," "the Chairman of the National Committee," "the biggest newspaper owner in America," et cetera. A fertile, if elderly, basic idea—the development of a woman as she travels over the bumpy Life Road—is here rendered on the upper octaves with one weak hand, a hand so little experienced at the melodies which it has sought to sound that discord plays at tag with discord. Mr. Sheldon writes well, but his ability in this direction no longer conceals for even a moment his bookshelf views of the world's great skirmish. His present play smells of life at second hand; its characters give one the

impression of Jack London and Arnold Bennett having tea with Elinor Glyn in Edmund Russell's studio; its lofty allusions to art and music are redolent of the guide book; its conceptions of the methods of politics and journalism are whimsical to say the least; and what of meager drama it reveals owes royalties to William C. DeMille. Mr. Sheldon, evidently a student of theatrical traditions, has not overlooked the opportunity to gain one of the old momentarily moving—but patently foolish and faked-up—effects by slipping into his play the following familiar rubber stamp species of dramatic episode:

(The hero, turning wildly on his wife with a scream.)

"You're a low-down, lewd, bawdy jade—a lecherous, depraved, lickish baggage—a foul, ruttish, loathsome hussy—an incestuous mopsy—a shameless haridan—a gross wench, a debauched trull, a riggish trollop, a lascivious Jezebel, a wanton Messalina, an obscene Aspasia, a dissolute, meretricious, impure, unclean Delilah!!!!"

(A few minutes later, when he has regained his breath.)

"I beg your pardon, sweetheart. I didn't mean what I said. I wasn't myself. I'm sorry. Forgive me."

Why is Myrtle Anson sad, you ask, dear children? Because she has been ruined by Captain Greville Sartoris, the nasty thing! Why did Captain Greville Sartoris and his black mustache ruin little Myrtle, dear children? Because, otherwise, the midnight express might not have crashed into the car erstwhile containing the good and noble Hubert Brancaster's horse that was sure to win the race. But why, you ask, did the midnight express want to biff Hubert's horse? Because then Mrs. D'Aquila, who wore a dark red dress and was therefore very wicked, might get even with the innocent and fair Lady Diana. So, dear children, you see that the real reason the villainous Captain Greville Sartoris ruined Myrtle was that Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton might get a start on the plot for "THE WHIP," the Drury Lane melodrama that is now with us. "THE WHIP," once on its way, is as full of plots and crossplots as the Jamaica Estates. Good grounds for thrill chuckles.

AGAIN THE BUSY FICTIONEERS

By H. L. Mencken

IF H. G. WELLS, the Englishman, had as firm a grip upon character and situation as Theodore Dreiser, the American; and if Theodore Dreiser, the American, had half the humor and a third of the feeling for phrase and climax of H. G. Wells, the Englishman—well, if any such exchange or compromise of talents were possible, or better still, if one of the two men could monopolize the talents of both, then we should have a very excellent novelist indeed.

As it is, we must thank the devil and his angels for what we have got. Dreiser may move along at times with the slowness and ineptness of a hippopotamus, bogged in morasses of parts of speech, stumbling over his own feet, but, after all, he gets somewhere, he achieves something; he produces, in the end, a genuine novel, which means a genuine description and interpretation of life as human beings are living it in the world. And Wells, for all his flightiness, his lingering extravagances and his occasional debauch of writing for mere writing's sake, is still a first rate journeyman fictioneer, with more to say in one volume than Arnold Bennett has to say in four.

In brief, both men rise superior to their defects, despite the fact that those defects are numerous and insistent. Say what you will against Dreiser, you must always admit at last that no other living American has done anything better, taking it by and large, than "Sister Carrie"; and say what you will against Wells, you must always come to the confession that such things as "Tono-Bungay," "Ann Veronica" and "The New Machiavelli" do not belong to the

common run of fiction, with its puny amours, its rubber stamp rhetoric and its brummagem philosophy, but to a higher and rarer class of books, to which all too few contributions are made in these facile and platitudinous days.

If you ask me whether I think Dreiser is a better novelist than Howells, I answer you discreetly that Dreiser never giggles, and so leave you to work it out for yourself. And if you ask me if Wells is better than Hardy or George Moore or Conrad or Henry James, I make answer that Hardy is too ancient a man to be brought into such disputations, and that Moore and Conrad are no more Englishmen than Gabrielle D'Annunzio, and that Henry James, though undoubtedly as English as Trafalgar Square, if choice counts for more than birth, has not written in the actual tongue of England since the time of the Homestead riots. Thus I avoid vain comparisons and rob you of your show. But meanwhile I advise you earnestly to read both Wells and Dreiser, and in particular to read the books that they will write and print hereafter. Whatever they are today, it is ten to one that they will be vastly better tomorrow, and upon that wager I stake my hide, my millions and my sacred honor.

So we come to "MARRIAGE," Wells's latest (*Duffield*), and there we find him both at his best and at his worst. Nothing he has ever done is more vivid and searching than his account of the meeting and marriage of Marjorie Pope and young Dr. Richard Godwin Trafford, with the attendant acts of sacrifice, perfidy and chicane; nor has he ever drawn more lively figures than these two, the one a red-haired college girl of defective

morals, the other a molecular physicist with the scientific passion of a Darwin, the amorous romanticism of an American business man and the good looks of a London actor-manager. Marjorie is engaged to Mr. Magnet, a rich and eminent humorist, at the time Trafford crosses her path (or rather falls into her path, for he tumbles into her father's garden from an aeroplane), but it is instantly apparent that Magnet is done for. Three or four days later Trafford and Marjorie meet in the Pope garden by moonlight, and there tumble into each other's arms with glad hearts and not the slightest sense of either treason to Magnet or offense to Mrs. Grundy. Papa Pope finds them in a sort of swoon of joy, and gives Trafford a belt over the head. Three months later they elope.

So far, so good. Not only Marjorie and Trafford themselves, but also the minor characters of the tale are sketched in with sure and eloquent strokes—Magnet, the great humorist, with his feeble facetiousness and his Philistine pruderies; Papa Pope, the fireside bully, with his vapid rages, his numskull adventures in the stock market and his firm faith that the world is going to the devil; Mamma Pope, his weak and battered mate; the patient, believing mother of Trafford; the lesser Popes; Solomonson, the Jew; Aunt Plessington, the merciless altruist; Uncle Hubert, her husband, secretary and valet. All of those folks have the blood of life in them. Old Pope, true enough, comes close to the conventional heavy father more than once, but always, at the last moment, he is given a fillip which makes him alive again. And so with Aunt Plessington. Now and then she seems to be stiffening into a dummy of farce, but the author never fails to come to her aid in time.

What is more, a colorful and realistic background is provided for the show. Nothing, indeed, could be more incisive and amusing than Wells's description of that great welter of movements and reforms in which such persons as Aunt Plessington waste their lives. He knows the species, I dare say, at first hand, and he is acutely conscious of every fallacy

in its reasoning, of every admixture of social and political poppycock, of every pathetic grotesquerie behind its unquestionable earnestness. Again, he gives us magnificent writing when he sets out to contrast the muddled thinking of the average Englishman, and particularly of the average English politician, with the clear, biting thinking of such a man as Trafford. I wish I could quote from his discussion of these differences, but my space is too short. All I may do is to call your attention to the fact that in this department, wherein nine novelists out of ten fail wholly, Wells does his very best work. His characters, in brief, are not mere beings *in vacuo*, like the bisque gods and goddesses of the best sellers, but creatures who take color and substance from a definite and elaborately worked-out environment, and respond to every change in it, and project their personalities into it, and so have rank as indubitable mammals.

But the story that is thus begun so adroitly and carried on with such resource and skill goes to pieces, alas, before it ends. The first few years of the Traffords' marriage remain credible enough. Trafford, the honeymoon behind him, throws himself whole-heartedly into his work, and Marjorie essays housekeeping and motherhood upon his modest stipend. But a streak of recklessness is in her, and it soon shows itself. A beautiful present appeals to her with ten times the vigor of a secure future. She outruns her allowance, debts pile up, Trafford is forced into degrading drudgery to make both ends meet. Bit by bit the situation grows worse. Trafford's one hope of honorable escape is by way of sustained and brilliant work, with an F. R. S. and a well paid professorship following after; but it is just this sustained and brilliant work that becomes more and more difficult, and finally downright impossible. Doubts and qualms overtake him: perhaps he is asking too much of a young and much alive girl. What right has he to condemn her to the narrowness and stinting of a pundit's life? In the end—who knows?—he may fail, after all, and then their youth will be gone, and

their chance of happiness with it. Of a sudden he makes up his mind. He has invented a method of producing rubber artificially, and Solomonson, the Jew, is badgering him unmercifully to turn it into millions. He yields to Solomonson—and to Marjorie. In five years he is a rich and idle man, and Marjorie is one of the rising hostesses of London, up to her eyes in movements and reforms, the envy of Aunt Plessington, the center of a brilliant and ever widening circle.

But all this, alackaday, is tragedy to Trafford, and tragedy, too, to Mr. Wells's novel. Trafford grows moody, unrestful, occupationless. The impulse to track down facts is still within him; he yearns for his old, bare laboratory, his microscopes and test tubes, the solitary labor of the savant. But a trial shows him that he has lost form, no doubt beyond remedy. Five years in the world have spoiled him for science. What to do? He decides to devote himself to some great work for his fellow men, preferably some obscure and thankless work. But what? He must go somewhere and think it over, somewhere far from London. Labrador suggests itself vaguely; he has been struck by some traveler's tale of its great spaces and its loneliness. His first plan, of course, is to go alone; one of his chief objects, indeed, is to get away from Marjorie. But she elects herself his companion and nurse and they sail together. Far in the wilderness they make their camp, preparing for the long arctic winter. And there, fighting outrageous nature together, sitting around their campfire, smoking the same pipe, they—

But I leave the rest to your curiosity, for it is here that "MARRIAGE," as it were, loses its mainsail and begins to stagger in the gale. The reality of the thing vanishes; the typical becomes the unique and incredible; a golden fog of fantasy settles down. I am not saying that these scenes are not well done; all I am saying is that they do not belong to the scenes that have gone before. Starting out to depict the stresses and storms of a modern marriage, under the complex but none the less orderly and

understandable conditions of civilization, Wells proceeds gaily to convert it into marriage of the Stone Age. And so, as I have said, his book goes to pieces. When Trafford makes his million there are the first hints of disaster; when he and Marjorie sail from Liverpool the wreck is complete. Wells, I dare say, will get over that weakness for the bizarre and extravagant in the course of time, but so far he has not been able to shake it off. The shadow of "The War of the Worlds" and "The First Men in the Moon" hangs over all the novels of his later and better manner.

You remember, no doubt, the airship flight in "Tono-Bungay," almost a commonplace today, but still wholly fantastic then. Such habits, however, wear themselves out. On some happy tomorrow Wells will forget at last that he was once the English Jules Verne. When that day comes I haven't the slightest doubt whatever that he will write a novel that will give him a secure place among the greater English novelists of the twentieth century. No man writing today understands the spirit of that century better, and no man is a more accomplished master of written speech.

The Dreiser novel is "THE FINANCIER" (*Harper*), and like "Marriage" it is full of the characteristic faults of the author. The character of Frank Cowperwood, the financier, is not revealed by brilliant flashes, but by the slow and laborious accumulation of detail. What is more, the background is made visible and comprehensible in the same onerous and indefatigable manner. When Cowperwood builds and furnishes a house, the chief rooms in it are described with such care that scarcely a chair is overlooked. And when Cowperwood, mixing politics and finance, comes a sad cropper, and is haled into the law courts to answer for his crimes, we get a minute analysis of the process of justice, beginning with an account of the political obligations of the judge and district attorney, proceeding to a consideration of the habits of mind of the twelve jurymen, and ending with a summary of the majority and minority

opinions of the court of appeals, and a discussion of the motives, ideals, traditions, prejudices, sympathies and chicaneries behind them.

Do I say "faults"? "Faults" is not the word. Rather say "methods" and let it go. This is the way that Dreiser chooses to write; and say what you will against it and against him for choosing it, you must always admit that he keeps his story unflinchingly interesting from start to finish, that he thinks out his characters to six places of decimals, that nothing worth knowing about them is ever forgotten or glossed over or wrongly estimated, and that he achieves in the end an illusion so nearly perfect that it is almost uncanny.

"THE FINANCIER," it appears, for all its 780 pages, is merely the first volume of an elaborate history of Cowperwood; and Cowperwood, one soon senses, is meant to be a typical specimen of the American money baron, in his lordlier and more soaring incarnations. Note that I say money baron, and not hog baron or guano baron. The fellow, in brief, is of the highest aristocracy of wealth, an aristocracy which shades off, without material change, into all other aristocracies. Even money itself is too dirty for him: he confines himself to its cleaner symbols, stocks and bonds. And all he wants of those symbols is the power that goes with them—power to make lesser men do his bidding, power to surround himself with rare and beautiful things, power to amuse himself as he likes with women, power to defy and nullify the laws made for numskulls and weaklings. This, indeed, is the secret of the man: you must think of him as a sort of amalgam of revolutionist and voluptuary, a highly civilized Lorenzo the Magnificent, a man who would not hesitate two minutes about seducing a saint, but would turn sick at the thought of harming a child, even his own.

Naturally enough, there are breakers ahead for such an iconoclast in the Philadelphia of war time and the seventies, for that is the background against which he stands in this volume. On the one hand his quick thinking, his ruthless-

ness and his clearness of purpose give him great advantages over the old time bankers of the town, with their church pews and their side whiskers, and even over the rising school of political looters and bribers; but on the other hand he is just a bit too swift, financially and morally, for the procession. Old Edward Malia Butler, the rich political contractor, is the man who finally brings him down. Butler has a reason not wholly impersonal and patriotic: Cowperwood, with astounding impudence, has debauched his daughter under his very nose. So the old warhorse of graft goes snorting to the courts, and the young Napoleon of the Stock Exchange goes unrepentant to prison, brought virtuously to book, with all the solemn mountebankery of the law, for helping the City Treasurer to tap the city treasury. This brings us nearly to the end of the first canto of the Cowperwoodiad. When our hero emerges, the Black Friday of 1873 is impending, limitless in opportunity for thrifty souls, and when it comes he makes a million in four hours. Soon afterward, his wife divorced (I forgot to tell you about his wife), he and Aileen Butler set out for Chicago. The real theater of his high deeds, it appears, will be the Babylon by the lake, where all that is most foul in American life is side by side with all that is most hopeful and healthy and clean.

Thus the mere story, reduced here to somewhat misleading elementals. The virtue of it, as I have said, lies not so much in the way it is accomplished as in the thing accomplished. An enormously complex process, the interaction of crooked politics and crooked finance is made clear, dramatic, fascinating. Cowperwood himself, the principal figure, stands out in the round, comprehensible, appealing, alive. And all the others, in their lesser measures, are done as well—the pale wife of this relentless male; Aileen Butler, his mistress; his doddering and eternally amazed old father; his old-fashioned, stupid mother; Stener, the City Treasurer, a dishrag in the face of danger; and old Edward Malia Butler, that barbarian in a boiled shirt, with his Homeric hatred and his

broken heart. Particularly Old Butler. The years pass and he must be killed and buried, but not many readers of the book will soon forget him. Dreiser is at his best when he deals with old men. You remember, of course, Jennie's father in "Jennie Gerhardt," always in the background, as penny wise as an ancient crow, trotting to his Lutheran church, so pathetically ill used by the world he never understands. Well, Butler is another such, vastly different in all externals, but the same dismayed, helpless and heartbroken old man. What will Dreiser make of Cowperwood at sixty? In the next book of the history we shall find out.

So goes space, and books without numbers remain. Among them, too, are many that you can't afford to miss. For example, "MRS. LANCELOT," by Maurice Hewlett (*Century Co.*), an amazingly lively and entertaining tale of pre-Victorian days, with the Great Duke Himself (whoever he may have been) for its chief personage. Young Charles Lancelot, of the Treasury, marries Georgiana Strangways for love, and then dangles her before the Duke in the hope of getting on thereby. A dangerous, and even caddish business, for the Duke is a great devourer of such confectionery, but somehow one feels that Charles is far more the fool than the scoundrel. As for the Duke, he is bagged at once. Charles becomes his private secretary. Then he proceeds, with considerable dignity, to notify Georgiana that he is ready to accept her favors. Alas, for the Duke—Georgiana is not that sort of a girl. What is more, she convinces him, against all his experience of the world and the fair, that she isn't, and so he kisses her hand, pats her head and assures her of his distinguished and eternal consideration. And he is as good as his word, for when Georgiana presently falls in love with Gervaise Poore, the passionate poet, it is the Duke who helps her to elope, and the Duke who convinces Charles that it would be ungentlemanly to drag her back.

Altogether an excellent story, written bouncingly and ingratiatingly. The

Duke cuts a capital figure in it, and Georgiana is a sentimental Georgian heroine to the life, and Charles and Poore, each in his separate way, are astonishing and delightful lovers *ad absurdum*. No man, indeed, knows how to do a fantastic comedy of this sort better than Mr. Hewlett, whether the scene be Italy of the Renaissance or modern England. He can be whimsical and tender, as in "The Forest Lovers" and "The Fool Errant," and again he can strike authentically the sonorous Rabelaisian note, the note of loud, profane, heroic laughter, as in "The Song of Renny" and "Brazenhead the Great." I am aware of no fictioneer of the second rank who gives a better show for the money. If you are for the bitter problems of the world, you had better go to some other booth, but if the mood of joy is upon you, and you itch for an hour or two of light romance, *allegro* in tempo, prodigal in coloring and with a sly and searching humor in every line of it, then my advice is that you look for the sign of Hewlett.

Another blithe and amusing fellow, but with a shade more sentiment than the aforesaid and a shade less heartiness, is William J. Locke, whose current offering is "THE JOYOUS ADVENTURES OF ARISTIDE PUJOL" (*Lane*). All Locke heroes, of course, have much in common: they are all hopelessly out of sympathy with the money grubbing habits of the world; they are all blessed with unearthly and useless talents, such as speaking Walloon or playing the *viol di gamba*; and they all, or nearly all, pass from the stage with baroque and anachronistic brides on their arms. Aristide Pujol runs true to type. He is a peasant's son from Aigues-Mortes-sur-Méditerranée, polished by many wanderings through France and England, a teacher of languages, a seller of pills for the ague, a guide for American schoolmarmes in Paris, a builder of magnificent and mythical hotels, a boomer of obscure watering places, an amateur detective, *particeps criminis* in chicaneries with forged masterpieces, a field agent for dealers in Provençal wines. We follow him here through nine incredible adven-

tures. Once we see him saving the face and meal ticket of a suspected wife; again we see him restoring romance to the life of a wife neglected and forlorn; a third time he is rescuing an abandoned baby from the roadside and essaying to bring it up by the bottle; yet again, he is involved appallingly in the farcical amours of a provincial *maire*; finally, he storms and takes the heart of Miss Anne Honeywood, whose golden wedding day will see her nearly a centenarian. Nimble, jocund tales, wholly impossible but wholly delectable.

Three books of small town sketches, and all with humor to the fore. Whether "A BIT O' SILENCE," by Helen Hill McWilliams (*McDowell*), is fact or fiction I can't tell you. Maybe it is a mixture of both. But however it may be, it presents an extremely lively picture of the people of a small suburban town, with their endless card parties, their virtuous flirtations and their innumerable progeny. The thing has no visible plan, it simply rambles on light-heartedly for page after page. But the net impression I carry away from it is that of a group of very real folks, healthy, happy and kind of heart—rather Philistines, perhaps, with "The Rosary" on their pianos and the works of Robert W. Chambers on their bookshelves, but still honest men and good women, and typical of the best stock left in this conquered land. The "SUNSHINE SKETCHES" of Stephen Leacock (*Lane*) take us to Mariposa, a one-horse town of the Canadian hinterland, and reveal to us a humorist well worth better acquaintance. Here, indeed, are half a dozen character pieces of very high quality, always pushing close to the brink of burlesque, but always hauled back in time. Good stuff, too, is in "ZEBEDEE V," by Edith Barnard Delano (*Small-Maynard*), which essays to limn the hinds and hindesses of a Maryland village—not a village of the Black Belt, rotting in the sun, but one in the upper tier of counties, wholly un-Southern in habit and tradition. Here again we are always close to frank burlesque, and never quite go over. I recommend all three books.

They are unpretentious and friendly and human.

"THE LOST WORLD," by A. Conan Doyle (*Doran*), removes the bad taste left by the author's last volume of second rate short stories. It is a tale of an expedition into the wilds of South America, to a lost land of ape-men and prehistoric monsters, and it is written with captivating plausibility and ingenuity. Moreover, it presents a character novel and fascinating, Professor G. E. Challenger, to wit, a veritable rhinoceros of science, bowling over all lesser men like so many ninepins and floundering his way magnificently to fame. Not since his Sherlock Holmes days has Doyle given us anything so boldly conceived or so well written. Another thriller of parts is "HELL'S PLAYGROUND," by Ida Vera Simonton (*Moffat-Yard*), a chronicle of white men run amuck and gone to the devil in tropical Africa. The author shows inexperience in every line: whenever she faces a genuine situation she spoils it by overwriting it, and the whole thing is messy with sentimentality. But for all that, there is plenty of evidence of a first hand knowledge of Africa in it, and so the facts it presents are very interesting, whatever the deficiencies of the romance. Read it as a commentary upon Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," and perhaps even "Heart of Darkness" will gain something.

Finally, there is "OBJECT: MATRIMONY," by Montague Glass (*Doubleday-Page*), a thin little reprint of one of the best comic stories of our time. "OBJECT: MATRIMONY" first appeared in a weekly periodical in the midst of the Potash and Perlmutter series, but the famous cloak manufacturers do not figure in it. It tells the story of Philip Margolius's courting of Miss Birdie Goldblatt, and of the dramatic and laudable manner in which Mr. Henry Feigenbaum, of Pennsylvania, was plucked from his celibate cell by Miss Birdie's sister, the mustached but talented Miss Fanny. You remember it, of course. It is an almost perfect piece of humorous writing, a little masterpiece. Myself, I wouldn't trade it for the best of O. Henry.

SOMETHING PERSONAL

By the Editors

THE policy of THE SMART SET is to judge work by its interest quality rather than by the reputation of its author. Good stories are snapped up when they appear, no matter who the author. Readers never have presented to them a dreary, dismal story simply because its author has a celebrated name. So the reading world has come to look to this magazine for the exercise of a peculiar rare discrimination in the selection of its literary material.

A novel by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins is scheduled for one of the early issues of 1913. Marriage for money is the plot—a very up-to-date, interest-compelling theme certainly. This story, which the author has called "Ever After," shows the domestic discord that is sure to arise in a marriage of this kind. The way in which an agreeable result is finally reached suggests one method of solving the problems inevitable to such a marriage.

There will also appear early in the year a novel by William Richard Hereford, author of "The Paris of the French," which recently attracted such wide attention in our pages. This story, which is a triumph in atmosphere, also possesses one unique feature, in that it is told by a Frenchman about Americans. The plot turns on the theory that two talented persons should not be allowed to fall in love with one another, and the efforts made by well meaning friends to keep two young students apart.

Another novel, "The Chalk Line," is by an anonymous writer—"the author of 'The Mastering Flame'" is the only name this novelist will give.

Those who remember the enthusiasm that greeted "The Mastering Flame" when it first appeared will look for something particularly piquant in this new novel, and they'll not be disappointed—there isn't a dull line in it.

We cannot attempt here to outline all the features that are planned for the coming year, or even for the first few months; but mention of merely a few will serve to show that THE SMART SET is keeping up with its watchword, "A Magazine of Cleverness."

A new story by Laurence North will appear in the February issue. Mr. North is known as the author of distinctly clever work. SMART SET readers will recall his novel "Syrinx" that we published in 1909—one of the brightest literary conceptions in recent years.

John Fleming Wilson, Anne Warner, Margarita Spalding Gerry, John Kendrick Bangs, Campbell McCulloch and Melville Chater are all scheduled to appear next month. Harriet Prescott Spofford's latest story, one of the most charming romances she has ever written, will be seen early in the year. Essays, stories and poems by Edgar Saltus and Richard Le Gallienne are on the list, as is a delightful satire on late fashions in literature by James L. Ford, who can recognize a sham and puncture a bubble at as long range as any man in America. George Bronson Howard, Fred Jackson, Reginald Wright Kauffman, William R. Lighton, John a' Beckett and Ethel Sigsbee Small are others whose work will appear shortly.

The Prize Winners

Taken as a whole, the titles submitted in our second Prize Title Contest

show an improvement over those suggested for Mr. MacAlarney's striking tale. The contestants evidently gave Miss Ashworth's story close study; they grasped more firmly the principles of good nomenclature. Yet, curiously, this second contest also brought to light a great number of titles that have already done distinguished service. These old literary friends derived from many sources, but the majority hailed from the theater. Special favorites were "The Highest Bidder," "Still Waters Run Deep," "The Moth and the Flame," "Bought and Paid For," and "The Easiest Way," and in all fully a score of well known play titles wove a kind of refrain into the business of judging and set the Bench dreaming of pleasant hours spent on the dark side of the footlights.

Turning to the titles clearly based on study of the story to be named, the judges met certain combinations over and over again. Especially popular were "Being Sensible," "Yes, Mama," "The Quiet Ones," "Are We Worth It?" and—subtle flattery—"The Smart Set." Or was that last title meant facetiously? The jokers as a class had less to say to us this time. Possibly they were too busy paying election bets. "Ain't It Hell to Be Poor?" was the highest achievement in this special field.

But the winner? The judges were agreed that "Social Cowards" was, all things considered, the best title. This time it was not found necessary to divide the prize money, and a cheque for one hundred dollars was at once forwarded to Mrs. Caroline Smith, of San Diego, California.

To choose the ten next best titles was not so simple, for good titles of the second rank were many. The prizes of a year's subscription to THE SMART SET were finally awarded to:

"The Social Undertow," Basil Burwell, New York, N. Y.

"Overtrained," W. E. Crozier, Baltimore, Md.

"Narcotic Wealth," Clara M. Slade, Montreal, Can.

"The Tapestry of Tears," Martha B. Moreland, Norfolk, Va.

"Gilding the Little God," Crede Hasking Calhoun, Canal Zone, Panama.

"Honeymoon or Moneymoon," Mrs. Lafayette French, Austin, Minn.

"Cash on Delivery," Ethel Evans, Toronto, Can.

"The Altars of Society," Mrs. Joseph Crawford, Washington, D. C.

"The Money Maniacs," Dorie Dennie, Baltimore, Md.

"Worldly Goods," Mrs. Emery Pottle, New York, N. Y.

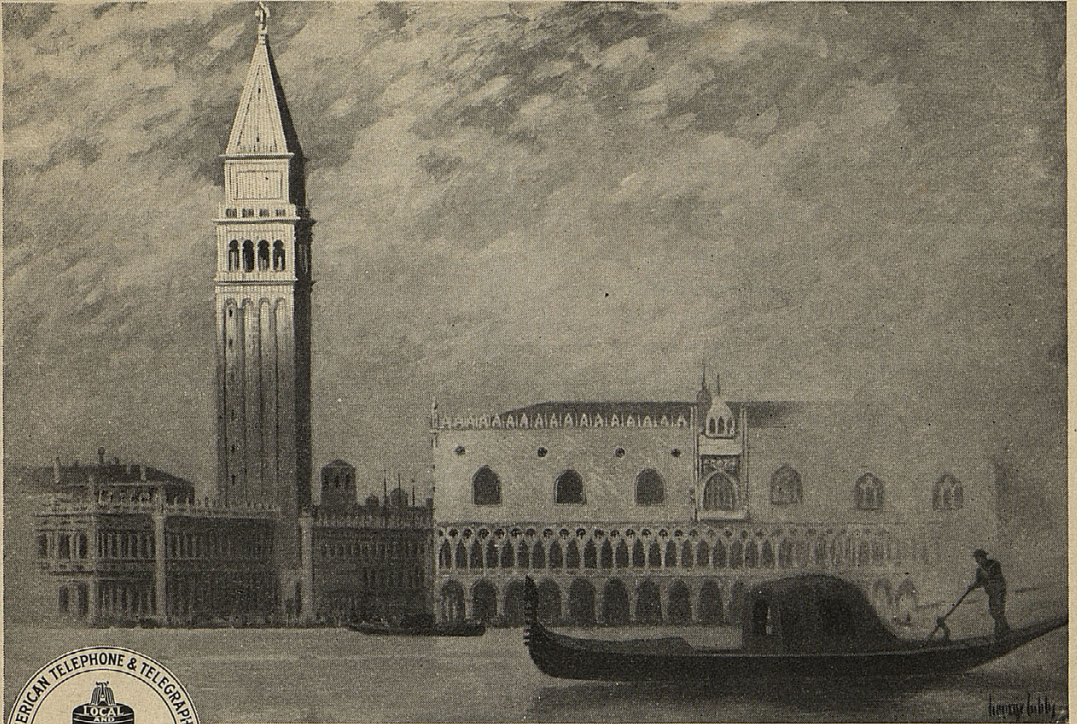
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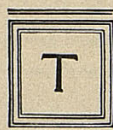
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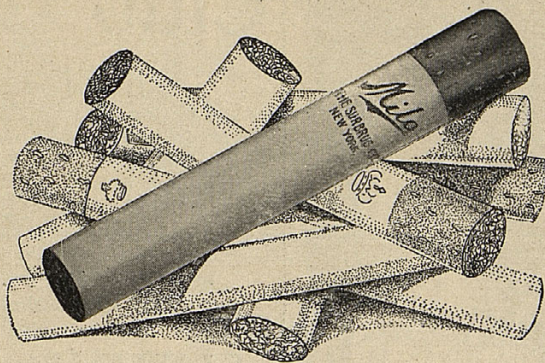
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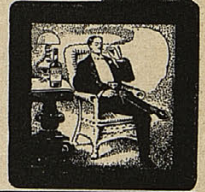
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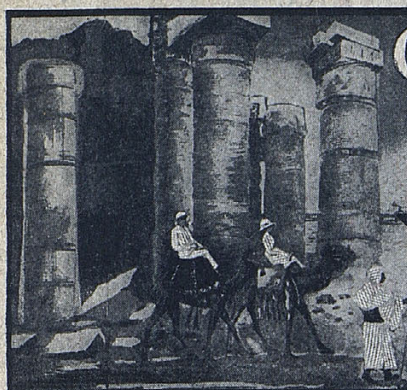
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